

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

SEPTEMBER 1984

ONE DOLLAR



# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

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Our special "wraparound" section is a bonus of eight pages of information for the hunter, including game harvest figures, the outlook for this year's hunting seasons, tips on caring for your boots and waders, important dates to remember this fall, and more.

## Cover

Whitetail deer; photo by William Lea, Pisgah Forest, North Carolina. Is a magnificent buck like this in your future? Be sure to sight in your rifle ahead of time (page 32), and you may bag a deer worthy of the record books (page 7).

Back cover: illustration by Phyllis Saroff, Rockville, Maryland. September 22 is National Hunting and Fishing Day. Read about it in our Special Section.



# Special Section

## Hunting Outlook 1984-85



When it comes to hunting in the Old Dominion, we really do have it made in Virginia. With approximately 487,100 hunters, Virginia ranks 16th out of 50 states in the number of hunters and 13th nationally in terms of the annual days of hunting enjoyed by Virginia sportsmen and women (9,960,000 days of hunting). The statewide harvests of deer and bear are in the top 20 states in the country (12th and 16th respectively) and the Virginia wild turkey harvest is number six in the nation! Small game harvest for rabbit, grouse, squirrel and quail places each of these species in the top 20 as well. Virginia public hunting lands, either state-owned or cooperatively managed, produced the following percentage of the total known statewide harvest in 1983-84: 21% of all deer, 23% of all turkey, and 50% of all bear.

The 1983-84 deer season was unusual in that it was only the second season in 11 years which failed to produce a new record deer harvest! Even so Virginia hunters, with a deer take of 85,778, scored the second highest kill on record in the Commonwealth. Since poor weather and reduced hunting pressure (and not fewer deer) were responsible for the drop in kill, the forecast for the 1984-85 season is for an excellent season and a new record harvest! As in the past the counties of Bath, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Augusta, Highland, Grayson, Botetourt, Craig, Rockbridge and Allegheny offer some of the best deer hunting.

More than 15,000 wild turkeys were harvested during the license year with 10,805 birds and 4,580 gobblers taken during the fall '83 and spring '84 seasons respectively. The fall harvest was down by approximately 20% as a result of poor recruitment of young

(especially west of the Blue Ridge) and reduced season length accounted for some reduction in the southwestern turkey kill. The spring gobbler season, while hampered by cold wet weather, resulted in slightly more toms taken than in the spring of 1983. Early reports on turkeys are encouraging and the prospects appear good for both the fall '84 and spring '85 seasons. Top turkey counties in the 1983 fall season included Buckingham, Bath, Bedford, Amelia, Allegheny, Caroline, Rockbridge, Cumberland and Giles. Counties leading the 1984 spring gobbler season included Bedford, Sussex, Bath, Amherst, Prince George, Westmoreland, Franklin, Halifax, Scott and Charles City.

According to research biologist Dennis Martin, who coordinates the Commission's data collection on bears, the outlook for the upcoming season is excellent and the harvest should continue to be above the 10-year average kill of 263. If the mast (acorns, etc.) crop is good, the kill may well exceed 300 bruins for the third straight year! Hunters should consider public hunting lands for access to good bear range and counties consistently producing good harvest include Rockingham, Albemarle, Augusta, Botetourt, Giles and Nelson. Bowhunters, accounting for 42 animals last year (11.5% of the total), should look for another outstanding year!

While rabbits always seem to manage a disappearing act between summer and fall, indications from small game surveys are that rabbits are abundant. Rabbit hunters, especially those with good hounds, who are

willing to hunt cutover areas and other locations affording rabbits very thick cover, should be well rewarded. Results from last year's season proved favorable, especially in the western part of the state.

Based on spring quail call counts, bobwhite hunting promises to be best in the Tidewater area of the Old Dominion during the 1984-85 season. Within the region, the Eastern Shore may offer some of the best bird hunting. While the picture appears bright for the Tidewater, however, the remainder of the state will not fare as well. Quail production in the Piedmont will remain at or below last year's level with conditions slightly more favorable for quail in the eastern Piedmont. Prospects for quail hunting in the northern and western regions of the state do not appear good; however, better hunting for quail west of the Blue Ridge will be found in the west central area.

Squirrel hunting in the Commonwealth last year was average; some of the better hunting occurred in the higher elevations in the western mountains. The same western areas, because of last year's mast crop, should provide good squirrel hunting in 1984. The eastern portion of the state, with only poor to fair mast in 1983, will likely offer average hunting opportunity for the gray squirrel in 1984.

Grouse hunting in the 1983-84 season was not as productive as the year before. The number of birds flushed per hour of hunting was quite low, only 1.17. The only flush rates lower than the past season occurred during the 1975, '76 and '77 seasons, when grouse numbers bottomed out in the Commonwealth. Periodic fluctuations are to be expected with small game species and production data from the '83-84 season indicated that the percentage of juvenile grouse in the harvest was slightly above the 10-year average. Hunters can expect grouse numbers to continue to improve and a fair season appears likely for the state in 1984.

# Statewide Deer, Bear, and Turkey Harvest

County	1981 — 1982			1982 — 1983			1983 — 1984		
	Deer	Bear	Turkey	Deer	Bear	Turkey	Deer	Bear	Turkey
Accomack	259	0	0	268	0	0	359	0	0
Albamarie	1,453	46	182	1,515	37	296	1,457	35	247
Allaghany	1,072	21	284	1,580	10	419	1,374	13	329
Amalia	1,589	0	197	1,687	0	306	2,270	0	331
Amharst	1,106	14	147	1,215	18	283	881	5	180
Appomattox	650	0	144	648	0	242	594	0	208
Augusta	1,752	36	268	2,466	19	416	1,957	26	245
Bath	2,447	13	395	3,291	9	693	2,772	12	361
Bedford	1,719	18	217	2,069	12	388	1,673	16	338
Bland	789	9	200	1,072	7	296	1,017	4	198
Botatourt	1,289	23	366	1,877	18	356	1,631	25	280
Brunswick	995	0	116	1,335	0	161	1,507	0	167
Buchanan	1	0	0	8	0	0	6	0	3
Buckingham	2,008	0	334	1,839	0	449	1,988	0	366
Campbell	270	0	86	367	0	226	310	0	150
Carolina	1,602	0	254	1,745	0	427	1,998	0	312
Carroll	252	0	118	477	0	164	359	0	147
Charles City	1,391	0	12	740	0	25	830	0	40
Charlotta	555	0	129	707	0	180	869	0	177
Chasapeake	430	5	0	337	3	0	311	8	0
Chastarfield	1,134	0	28	1,192	0	48	1,549	0	89
Clarka	307	0	43	468	0	36	414	0	35
Craig	1,275	17	238	2,090	12	241	1,520	6	228
Culpapar	539	0	95	509	0	103	559	0	85
Cumberland	1,366	0	246	1,254	0	257	1,401	0	264
Dickanson	1	0	0	11	0	0	17	0	8
Dinwiddie	1,039	0	117	1,152	0	218	1,339	0	214
Essax	177	0	23	250	0	35	244	0	38
Fairfax	50	0	3	56	0	2	116	1	0
Fauquier	1,440	0	114	1,628	0	123	1,383	0	115
Floyd	252	0	43	383	0	72	318	0	71
Fluvanna	1,254	0	205	1,371	0	259	1,109	0	240
Franklin	657	0	63	892	0	157	719	0	157
Fraderick	1,299	0	207	1,491	0	243	1,186	0	149
Gilas	1,180	23	324	1,568	12	327	1,094	26	261
Gloucester	226	0	0	246	0	0	234	0	0
Goochland	1,032	0	140	1,027	0	201	1,008	0	166
Grayson	1,957	0	119	2,319	0	174	1,730	0	153
Greena	127	10	16	123	11	17	108	10	26
Greensville	604	0	0	697	0	17	712	0	10
Halifax	817	0	177	1,107	0	318	1,165	0	208
Hampton - Newport Naws(City)	182	0	0	216	0	0	280	1	3
Hanovar	384	0	19	434	0	167	455	0	164
Hanrico	386	0	0	364	0	0	553	0	18
Henry	146	0	9	241	0	21	292	0	26
Highland	1,538	6	154	1,992	4	321	1,658	7	157
Isla of Wight	900	0	0	804	0	0	994	0	1
Jamas City	276	0	0	408	0	0	433	0	2
King & Quean	500	0	103	569	0	119	627	0	111
King Gaorga	802	0	0	755	0	0	835	0	0
King William	623	0	112	580	0	116	700	0	174
Lancaster	359	0	0	379	0	0	357	0	1
Lea	138	0	0	124	0	0	180	0	13
Loudoun	1,519	0	70	1,496	0	72	1,513	0	85
Louisa	792	0	198	1,005	0	249	942	0	236
Lunanburg	669	0	53	692	0	89	811	0	100
Madison	193	25	19	238	10	15	203	10	33
Mathaws	46	0	0	53	0	0	62	0	0
Macklanburg	514	0	0	618	0	0	738	0	9
Middlesex	54	0	3	105	0	4	136	0	7
Montgomery	301	5	139	617	9	163	596	14	138
Nelson	740	27	124	938	16	248	821	22	165
New Kant	1,475	0	25	810	0	54	818	0	63
Northampton	116	0	0	124	0	0	137	0	0
Northumberland	234	0	0	262	0	0	386	0	0
Nottoway	1,192	0	68	1,054	0	84	1,275	0	132
Oranga	436	0	37	480	0	99	428	0	58
Page	521	18	76	711	23	86	502	14	69
Patrick	444	0	37	621	0	42	535	0	40
Pittsylvania	1,385	0	112	1,535	0	179	1,654	0	143
Powhatan	1,454	0	164	1,449	0	200	1,556	0	209
Prince Edward	970	0	164	927	0	223	1,164	0	206
Princa Gaorga	850	0	39	722	0	64	830	0	107
Princa William	427	0	42	841	0	93	659	0	59
Pulaski	364	0	89	600	1	135	561	1	141
Rappahannock	1,308	21	79	1,213	13	100	931	14	82
Richmond	391	0	0	415	0	0	471	0	0
Roanoke	115	0	32	214	0	33	248	0	65
Rockbrida	1,210	23	327	1,752	12	375	1,372	8	263
Rockingham	2,632	50	272	3,384	48	360	2,485	47	123
Russall	88	2	15	53	1	14	70	2	9
Scott	204	0	59	140	0	66	180	0	25
Shenandoah	2,223	5	305	2,734	6	431	2,115	11	145
Smyth	486	2	80	1,090	3	114	742	0	97
Southampton	2,772	0	0	2,210	0	0	3,032	0	4
Spotsylvania	514	0	55	719	0	121	659	0	104
Stafford	468	0	72	524	0	97	499	0	95
Suffolk	884	4	0	917	0	0	945	2	2
Surry	1,120	0	0	902	0	0	1,068	0	0
Sussex	1,864	0	0	1,101	0	83	1,226	0	71
Tazewell	171	3	55	193	2	79	240	9	67
Virginia Baach (City)	197	0	0	201	0	0	241	0	0
Warran	793	4	103	1,010	13	112	824	9	73
Washington	265	2	40	246	1	54	270	2	57
Westmorland	219	0	0	312	0	0	328	0	1
Wisa	90	0	79	89	0	75	110	0	35
Wytha	855	0	162	1,208	4	186	961	3	198
York	427	0	18	675	0	9	947	0	25
TOTALS	78,388	432	9,257	88,745	334	13,307	85,739	363	10,801

The dove season should offer excellent hunting this fall, especially during the September and October segments when Virginia-produced doves are taken. The three-segment season (September 8-October 27; November 19-November 24 and December 22-January 4) adopted by the Commission this year will afford dove hunters the opportunity to pursue the sport during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day holiday seasons. The two late segments provide for hunting from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset daily as compared to the noon-to-sunset, half-day hunting permitted during the early segment. Flights of migrant doves from northern states are expected for relatively good dove hunting through the latter portion of the season.

The woodcock season has been set for October 29-January 1 which will provide for hunting opportunity during the peak migration through Virginia. However, declines in population numbers mean that only a fair overall season should be expected during the upcoming season.

Early reports from Canada indicate that the number of breeding pairs of ducks was up and that production should be good to excellent in both Ontario and Quebec. The Maritimes also reported that the number of breeding pairs was up and that production there was expected to be above average. Also, goose nesting got off to an early start and it's expected that Virginia waterfowl hunters will enjoy good goose and duck hunting during the 1984-85 season.

The prospects for the general hunting season in 1984-85 appear to be good with greater opportunities for some species than for others. Even in an average year, however, the hunting in Virginia is better than just about anywhere else. Considering all that is available to the hunter in terms of big and small game, we really do have it made in Virginia. □

by Bob Duncan  
Assistant Chief of Game





## Game Law Summary: Use Last Year's

You remember the game law summary, don't you? It's the little pamphlet with a picture of a burly man in a blaze orange hunting coat on the front. Find it! Look in your hunting jacket or in the truck or wherever you tucked it at the end of last season—and use it again this year.

The hunting brochure was designed to be used for two seasons, 1983 and again this year in '84. All the dates and information for the upcoming season are in this publication.

Using this publication for two years is an effort by the Game Commission and the Governor of Virginia to save money—in this case, your money. The considerable expense saved by not printing almost a million of these brochures this year is going to important wildlife projects.

But we need your help. While license agents will have a limited supply of game law brochures, there won't be enough to go around unless you dig up the one you got last year and use it again. □



## Dove Rules Available

A new and expanded summary of migratory game bird regulations is now available from your local hunting and fishing license agent. The larger size accommodates some new regulations and show this season's three-way split dove season.

The brochure also contains information on how you may take migratory game birds and tells you the methods and equipment that are legal for taking this kind of game. The following is a summary of the seasons listed in this brochure:

### DOVES

SEASON: September 8 - October 27—*Hunting permitted from 12 o'clock noon until sunset each day.*

November 19 - November 24—*Hunting permitted from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.*

December 22 - January 4—*Hunting permitted from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.*

BAG LIMIT: 12 per day, 24 in possession.

### WOODCOCK

SEASON: October 29 - January 1

BAG LIMIT: 5 per day, 10 in possession.

HOURS: from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

### SNIPE

SEASON: October 17 - January 31

BAG LIMIT: 8 per day, 16 in possession.

HOURS: From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

### RAILS

SEASON: September 8 - November 16

HOURS: From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

BAG LIMITS: A total of 15 clapper rails and king rails counted together a day, 30 in possession and 25 sora and Virginia rails, counted together a day, 25 in possession.

### SPECIAL FALCONRY SEASON:

#### DOVE, RAIL

SEASON: September 24 - December 3, December 20 - January 4

### SNIPE

SEASON: October 17 - January 31

### WOODCOCK

SEASON: October 17 - January 31

BAG LIMIT (all falconry): 3 per day, 6 in possession.

HOURS (all falconry): From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

## Boots and Waders

When I was a youngster just getting started in hunting and fishing, many of us virtually lived in hip boots. They were the old, black work boots which were a bit on the heavy side but much tougher than the boots you find today. Perhaps they lasted so long because we wore them every day, instead of storing them away in a corner to rot.

It has been my experience that the more you wear rubber boots or waders, the longer they seem to last;

Sarah Bartanstein



*Protect your boots and waders, and they'll protect you. Proper storage is the key.*

(unless you snag them on a barb wire fence or otherwise damage them).

The experts tell us that the enemies of rubber footgear are ozone, sunlight and tension. Ozone is a product of electric motors and if you store your boots in the shop or garage near your power equipment or near a freezer or refrigerator, you are inviting disaster. It is also said that ozone can do its worst to boots that are folded tightly so that the rubber is under tension. The best way to store them is to make sure they are clean (particularly free of grease or oil), and fold them loosely in the box they came in. Place the box in a dark, cool place away from sources of ozone. A plastic bag gives protection from the air.

Don't carry boots around in a truck where they are exposed to sunlight and petroleum products. Sunlight is not good for rubber.

Speaking of footgear, buying it is getting more and more complicated. Once upon a time we had hip boots and waders. The boots were just that, boots, one for each foot. Some were over-the-knee boots and others came up to the hips. Waders were boots that were connected at the crotch and reached up to the chest.

Today, hip boots are called "hip waders" when, by the old definition they are not waders at all.

In addition, we can now buy insulated and uninsulated boots and waders. The insulated variety, particularly the better quality ones, are a joy to wear in cold weather. However, some tend to be a bit on the heavy side for warm weather use.

Waders are available with attached boots or the stocking foot type with which a wading shoe is worn. The felt soled wading shoes are great for fishing on slippery rocks, making the stocking foot wader very practical for the trout and smallmouth bass fisherman. However, if stocking foot waders are worn in the surf, sand has a way of chewing holes in the feet. The boot foot wader is more practical on the beaches.

Folks who spend lots of time in hip boots find that the work boot outlasts the lighter sportsman's boots. Watermen and trappers usually favor the old black boots over the modern lightweights.

Whether you wear lightweight or heavy work boots, insulated or uninsulated, they all have one thing in common—they leak only when the water is cold! □

by Jack Randolph

## Trophy Contest Dates Set

The Eastern Regional Championship of Virginia's Big Game Trophy Contest has been scheduled for September 21 and 22, 1984, to be followed by the Western Regional and Statewide Championships on October 5 and 6.

The eastern contest begins at noon on September 21 at the Julius Conn Gymnasium in downtown Newport News; the gym is on 29th Street between Huntington Avenue and Warwick Boulevard. It runs until 9 p.m. the first day, and the hours for the second day are 9 a.m. until 9 p.m.



The western regional and state contests will be held at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds on US 11, 1.6 miles south of Exit 62 off Interstate 81.

This year, the contest boasts a new feature, Virginia Big Game Citations for deer and bear.

Trophies are judged in the following categories: deer, class I (9 points and above), class II (7 and 8 points), class III (6 points and under), class IV (archery); bear (one class); and turkey (one class). Entries must have been killed in Virginia with a legal firearm during the 1983-84 season and must be accompanied by a big game tag.

The contest is sponsored annually by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association and the Rockingham-Harrisonburg Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America. For more information about the eastern regional contest, contact Charles A. Rogers, President, Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, 638 Creasy Avenue, Newport News, Virginia 23601; 804/595-7192 (home), 804/596-7668 (business). For further information about the western and state contests, contact Boyd Skelton, President, Rockingham-Harrisonburg Chapter of the Izaak Walton League, 412 North Main Street, Bridgewater, Virginia 22812; 703/828-3393. □

*Editor's note: A related feature story begins on page 7.*



# From Stone to Steel

## A History of Hunting Knives

story by C.H. Shaffer  
photos by Mel White



**K**nives have been essential tools for man's survival since prehistoric times. The earliest inhabitants of our country used knives fashioned of—and by—stone (above). The top photograph shows a much more refined, modern knife, the handle of which was fashioned from the lower jawbone of a bear.





*S*olingen, Germany and Sheffield, England were established during the eighteenth century as major centers for craftsmen of fine knives and cutlery, and their status continues to this day. The knives shown above are Solingen knives. The exact date of their origin—and that of the powder horn—are unknown, but they are certainly rare collectors' items.

**F**ew tools have played a greater role over a longer period of time in the development of civilization than have hunting knives. Knives have been an integral part of human existence in America since the Paleo-Indian period. Archaeologists have determined through a chemical process called radio carbon dating that primitive inhabitants have lived on this continent for at least 12,000 years. The most widely accepted theory is that prehistoric people entered our country from Asia. They had traveled slowly and gradually out of what is now known as Siberia, across the Bering Strait—which at that time was a land mass—down the west coast of Canada, and finally arriving in what is now the United States.

Those early inhabitants of our country either brought the technique with them, or soon thereafter developed the skills to create knives, spears and other tools flaked from rocks. Archaeologists have found spears and blades in association with the bones of such prehistoric animals as mastadons and now-extinct bison. This indicates that early humans had developed tools and weapons which enabled them to attack and slay huge beasts. They doubtless also needed tools to skin, eviscerate, dismember, and cut up animals that they had subdued. Our predecessors solved their problem by creating stone knives through a crude yet ingenious method.

It is theorized that the flaking of spears, knives and other artifacts basically required two rocks—a hammerstone and a source rock which, when fractured, would produce a workable flake. The early tool makers attempted to strike the base rock with a hammerstone at the proper angle to produce large flakes of the parent materials. Thereafter using antlers or bone flakes, the first tool makers would fashion a blade through a combination of percussion striking and pressure flaking. Antlers of deer, elk and other animals were ideal for fashioning



tools since that material is hard and resilient. Even today, archaeologists find antler tools associated with stone artifacts in the debris of ancient camps and villages. The most readily used materials for making artifacts included flint, chert, chalcedony, jasper, quartz, quartzite, rhyolite, greenstone and obsidian. Naturally, the early tool makers used the rocks that were available where they hunted and lived. However, in time, trading and transporting of native materials from one region to another became common.

**C**ontemporary archaeologists theorize about the uses of the various stone tools discovered through scientific digging or by surface searching. It is likely that each artifact served a number of diverse purposes. For instance, knives and spears are often difficult to distinguish. All spears could possibly have been used as knives, but not all knives could have been used as spears. A knife could be too broad, irregular, or bulky to serve as a flesh-piercing projectile point. Primitive knives could either have been held in the hand, or perhaps with a wooden or bone handle lashed or glued to the basic blade. While wooden handles would have disintegrated and we have no writ-



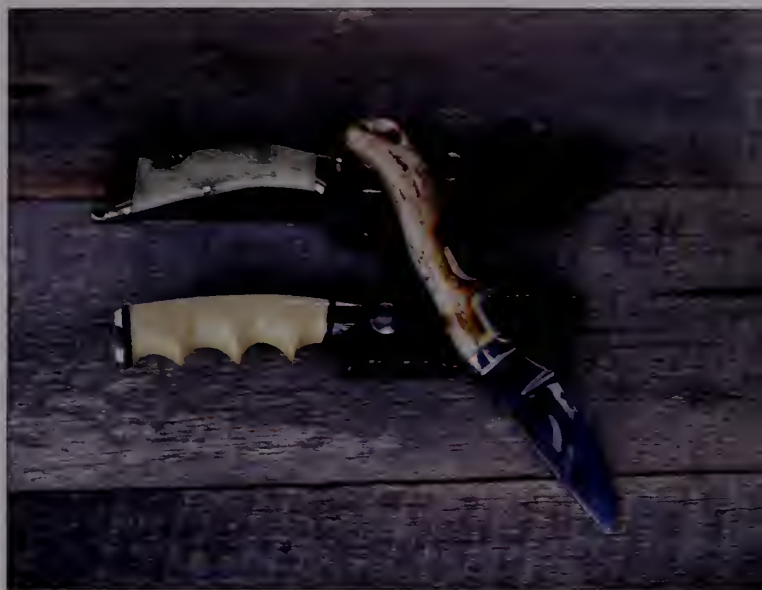


ten records of life in those prehistoric times, some stone knives have been found with bone or antler handles still attached.

It is significant that for thousands of years, early women and men survived and progressed in what is now our state and nation with stone knives and spears as their basic primary weapons. With these, they were able to make all of the other items they needed.

It has been recorded that bronze knives were made by artisans in Asia about 5,000 years ago and iron blades in Turkey over 3,000 years in the past. There must have been numerous uses for these crude knives, daggers, and short swords throughout those early cultures. We can safely surmise that those were the basic tools for hunting, fighting, butchering, carving and hundreds of other daily activities.

It wasn't until the middle 1700's that the technique for making steel out of molten iron ore was discovered. This important occurrence in our history brought about a virtual revolution in many industries including the knife-making trade. Craftsmen in two cities—Solingen, Germany and Sheffield, England—are recognized as the pioneers in producing the highest quality steel knives. There were undoubtedly numerous factors involved, but



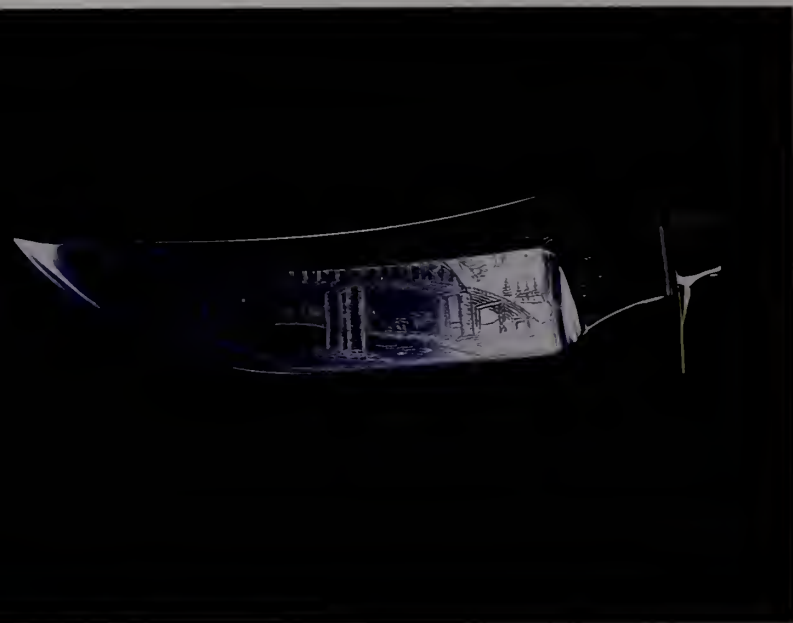
**T**he antler-handle knives shown at left are contemporary examples, custom-made pieces crafted by Virginia knifemaker John Douglas. Douglas also made knives pictured above and the modern knife pictured on page 3.

both cities became the cutlery capitals of their countries and of the world. Each had the basic iron ores, coal readily available for firing the furnaces, and an abundance of water for the essential grinding operations. The cities obviously had many dedicated and skillful cutlery experts. Their technology has been passed on to others through many generations so that Sheffield and Solingen artisans currently continue to produce the finest stainless steel knives in the world.

**T**hroughout the early history of the American west, when the hunters, gold miners, fur trappers, Indian traders and settlers were establishing homesteads and conquering the territory, German and English knives were in great demand as essential weapons and tools. Knives—as well as beads and fire water—were frequently traded to the naive native Americans for their valuable furs!

Early American-made hunting knives, pounded out and ground by blacksmiths, were reputed to have been very crude, with inferior metal, wooden handles and without hilts or guards. The first knife manufacturing companies of fine quality cutlery began in New England in the early 1800's. The Harrington Company was founded in 1818 and the famous John Russell operation, around 1834. The latter produced a superior hunting knife called the Green River knife which became a valued possession among rugged frontiersmen of the exciting western migrations.

If all of the legendary tales about the abundance of furbearing animals and the thundering herds of buffalo were correct (and we must assume that they were), good hunting knives were an absolute necessity to those early outdoorsmen. Buffalo hunters, those infamous game hogs, could not have butchered and skinned the hundreds of thousands of huge buffalo they are credited with slaughtering without the possession of superior



**T**his John Douglas knife features an engraving of a bridge which spans the Staunton River. The knife was raffled and the proceeds donated to the "Save the Staunton River" campaign several years ago.

knives. Anyone who has ever attempted to skin and flesh a beaver will confirm that a good steel knife was essential. Knives were valuable tools and weapons in Indian fighting, duels with enemies, butchering livestock and a thousand and one other uses in those turbulent days when our nation was being settled.

**N**o history of frontier knives would be complete without mention of the most famous weapon of all, the Bowie knife. According to numerous historical tales, Jim Bowie was a land speculator and fighting frontiersman from Louisiana. He was a legend in his time, as interesting and heroic a character for early writers as was Paul Bunyan, Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett. In the late 1820's, Bowie moved to San Antonio. On one of his many travels into adjacent territories, he met a skillful blacksmith, James Black, in a small town in Arkansas called Washington. He asked Black to make him a hunting knife and gave him a rough design. When Bowie returned sometime later, Black had made the Bowie model and one of his own creation. Bowie chose the Black design and a new chapter in American knifemaking was written.

Soon after, Bowie was attacked by three vicious highwaymen. The legends emphasize that with the aid of his new weapon, he was able to conquer all three of them. Then Bowie, along with Colonel Travis, Davey Crockett and 160 other heroic Texans were slain defending the Alamo against Mexican invaders on March 6, 1836. During the siege of the Alamo the most renowned knife in history disappeared. Thus the actual descriptions and

dimensions of that notorious blade were lost forever. It was alleged to have been a massive weapon, almost a foot and a half long with a wide blade and double guards.

Since the legends of the Bowie escapades coincided with the pre-Civil War migrations westward, there was a tremendous demand for replicas of his famous knife. Each covered wagon, stage coach and horseback rider carried the Bowie saga, spreading like the prairie fires across the Alleghenies, the Mississippi and the Rockies to the western coast. Trappers, buffalo hunters, gold miners, mountain men and Indian fighters all wanted a Bowie knife. In New England and other sections of our country, as well as in Sheffield, England, knife makers rushed to create their own versions of that renowned blade. Throughout those early years and even today, hundreds of different replicas of Jim Bowie's original knife have been created and sold. Several years ago we discovered an unusual hunting knife at a flea market. We were overjoyed to find inscribed on the blade, "Original Bowie Knife"; however, on closer examination, I found that the knife had been made in Japan! In all probability, James Black and our hero would not recognize any of the reproductions of their famous creation.

Following the gradual settling of the western wild lands (unfortunately at the expense of the American Indian, buffalo, and beaver), the popularity of hunting or sheath knives declined sharply. By then the Colt revolvers and the Winchester rifles had been perfected, and for the first time in history, the knife had been surpassed as the basic weapon.

The tailspin in demand for hunting knives continued into the early years of the twentieth century and through the depression. Case, Ka-Bar and several other companies survived the hard times and continued to produce quality products though specializing primarily in folding pocket knives.

**F**ollowing the end of World War II, large numbers of ex-servicemen who had learned to use weapons effectively started big game hunting. At the same time, big game populations, especially deer, were expanding in many states. Thus, once again there was a great demand for good hunting knives. Sheath knives became as important to hunters as guns, shells, insulated boots and longjohns.

Following the trends in guns and gun collecting, there is today a terrific interest in knife collecting, especially the folding pocket varieties. There are thousands of knife collectors, numerous knife shows, knife organizations, knife books and knife supply houses. Flea markets, antique dealers, old trunks in attics and Granddad's possessions are being besieged by knife collectors and traders who hope to discover valuable treasures.

During recent years, the number of skilled custom knife makers throughout the United States has increased. Their outstanding blades are becoming masterpieces of craftsmanship and are greatly valued as collector's items. Contemporary craftsmen, with superior stainless steel and tools, are able to create fine quality blades that still portray individuality.

Of course, all this means that knives, like old guns, are often much more valuable today than when first purchased or inherited. Due to the tremendous demand for old knives—the Cases, Solingens, Jim Bowies, Green Rivers, Pumas, Bucks and others—you might prefer to keep them in your safety deposit box rather than taking them on a hunting trip! □





William Lea

# Two That Made It

by Gerald Almy

Few Virginia hunters have bagged trophies magnificent enough to make the Boone & Crockett record books. Here, two tell how they did it.



Gerald Almy

*Virginia's number 2 typical Boone & Crockett deer, bagged by Clayton Jett of Front Royal on December 30, 1957.*

Have you ever dreamed of bagging a Boone & Crockett-class whitetail? You probably have, if you're an avid deer hunter. And most likely those flights of imagination have focused on some exotic locale like Mexico, Saskatchewan, Alberta or Montana. But there's no need for your dreams of a record-class whitetail to be aimed so far from home. There are Boone & Crockett-class whitetails right here in Virginia, on both public

and private land. It takes a great deal of skill, perseverance and no small amount of luck to find and bag one, but record book deer are present in the Old Dominion. To whet your appetite for the quest for such magnificent animals, here are the stories behind Virginia's number two and three typical whitetail bucks, as rated by the Boone & Crockett scoring system.

**D**ecember 30, 1957 was a cold, raw day with frigid winds bearing down from Canada and a thick mantle of snow laying heavy on the land. Clayton Jett remembers it well. He and his family had just gotten settled into their new house in Front Royal a week earlier. He had plenty of straightening up to do around the place and intended to spend the day in that fashion. But when his brother-in-law stopped in that afternoon and asked if he wanted to go deer hunting, Jett couldn't resist. He was a dedicated whitetail fan, and had been hunting deer since 1944, when he first carried a rifle into the woods at age 16.



"I couldn't even find my boots after the move, so I just grabbed my son's, which didn't fit right, and yanked them on. Off we went," Jett remembers. "My brother-in-law had been telling me about this big deer over on the farm we were going to that they'd been seeing and getting shots at, but somehow never managed to bring down. The farm was in Fauquier County, and they'd been running the deer with dogs."

Though he prefers stand hunting or still hunting, Clayton decided he'd go along for the afternoon. There were about 15 people hunting that day, as he remembers. "They put several of us out on stand, then took the dogs around to the other end of the farm to turn them loose. They told me to get behind this horse jump and wait there. Well, I'd hunted long enough that I knew not to get behind it. I said okay and waited until they left, then moved in front of the horse jump, so I'd have a clear shot if a deer came my way."

A short while later, Jett heard the dogs barking. "I saw these deer coming across the way. There were three of them. I could tell one of them was a pretty good buck. They went straight up the hill toward my brother-in-law. He shot twice, but the deer kept running strong."

"I just sat still. I said to myself, if you come out of that hollow, I'm gonna get you. Seconds later, he did just that. When he hit the mouth of the hollow and turned, about 150 yards away, that's when I raised my Winchester Model 70, aimed through the 3-9X Bushnell scope and fired. The gun was a .30/06, and I was shooting a 160 grain Winchester Power Point."

"The deer went down instantly, but he was so huge I chambered another round and shot again. I think that's the only deer I ever bagged that I put a second bullet in while he was lying on the ground. But he was just so big I didn't want to take any chances."

Jett knew he'd bagged a fine deer, but until he walked up and admired it at close range he had no idea just how beautiful and symmetrical the rack was. The deer had 10 even points, an 18-inch inside spread and a 20½-inch outside spread. The main beams were each 26 inches long, the tines 12 to 13 inches long. There were no broken points and no random odd points on the rack.

"The other hunters kidded me about missing with my second shot when the deer was already on the ground," said Jett, "because we only saw one bullet hole at first. But when we skinned him out we found the two bullet holes not an inch apart. I shot at an angle, and neither bullet exited out the opposite side."

In spite of its massive rack, the deer was physically in bad shape. "He was just as poor as a snake," said Jett. "You could count every one of his vertebrae." Jett believes the deer was emaciated from being run by the dogs over the course of the season. A biologist estimated the deer's age at 5½ years and said it would have weighed over 200 pounds if it had been fatter.

Because Virginia rates typical and non-typical deer in the same category in their big game contests, Jett's deer only ranked number two in the east that year and number three in the state. However, recently Jett had his trophy whitetail scored by Virginia Game Commission biologist Max Carpenter, an official scorer for Boone & Crockett, and it merited a whopping 179½ points.

*A Virginia sportsman has his trophy scored.* Photo by F.N. Satterlee.



When he enters the deer in the record books, Jett's magnificent whitetail will rank as the number two typical from the Old Dominion. The buck will rank just behind George Beahm's giant deer bagged in Rappahannock County over two decades ago, but only recently entered in the record books.

The deer Jett's buck will supplant in the number two position in the Boone & Crockett rankings has an interesting history behind it as well. This deer, which will rank number three after Jett's is entered in the record books, was bagged by Donald Houser, Sr., in Augusta County in the early 1960's. It scored 177 2/8 Boone & Crockett points, and stood for over 20 years as the number one typical from the Old Dominion. Though he no longer holds the number one position, Houser will remember his deer forever as the trophy of a lifetime. I interviewed him recently and this is the story of how he bagged his magnificent buck on public land only a short drive from his home.

It was a frosty morning when Houser left his white frame house in Churchville over two decades ago on opening day of Virginia's whitetail deer season. With his two sons and a few close friends, Houser drove to a nearby stretch of the one million-acre George Washington National Forest, parked his truck and began the long hike into his chosen stand location.

Though Augusta County, where he was hunting, is known for its trophy-caliber bucks, Houser wasn't going to be choosy about what size antlers the animals had that day. "It doesn't matter if it's a spike or a 10-pointer, I pull the trigger," he admits. "Venison tastes too good to let a legal buck walk by." It's a philosophy he shares with most Virginia hunters.

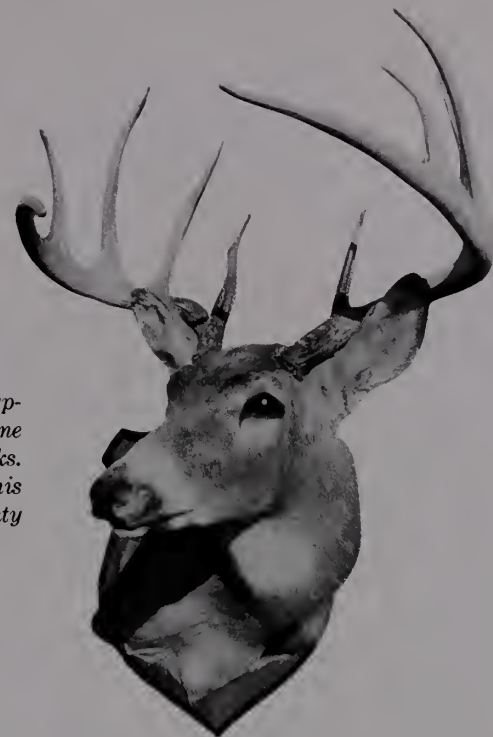
As was customary, Houser separated from his friends and sons upon entering the woods. Each took to their favorite spot to watch for whitetails. The air was crisp and his breath was visible in soft white puffs as he studied the brush, mature oak trees and rugged hollows for signs of his quarry.

The sound of breaking branches first alerted Houser. Slowly he twisted his neck in that direction and caught a glimpse of motion. It was a buck, working swiftly through the underbrush at 50 yards. From the deer's fast movement, Houser guessed he had been spooked by another hunter. The antlers looked huge, but he wisely kept his attention on the deer's progress and the matter of getting his gun up unseen and squeezing off a shot, rather than counting points on the animal's rack. There would be plenty of time for that later—if he made good on the chance for a shot.

The Remington 760 pump seemed to glide to Houser's shoulder instinctively, and the first shot from the .30/06 found its mark. The deer was hit in the spine. A second shot through the lungs and the buck was down for good. The animal sported 10 symmetrical points, thick, tall main beams and a wide spread. It was also a heavy animal, as Houser and his sons discovered when they dragged the deer out of the steep, mountainous terrain. "It weighed 185 pounds, field dressed. We pulled him down one ridge, then up another until we finally reached a flat area. That's where we found the others in our party and they helped us drag him out the rest of the way."

*Virginia's number 3 typical whitetail in the Boone & Crockett record books. Donald Houser killed this deer in Augusta County in the early 1960's.*

Gerald Almy



Houser had no idea that his buck was record book quality, but a friend who saw it told him the local Izaak Walton League was holding a contest nearby and that he ought to enter it. The buck took first place easily, and later Commission biologist Max Carpenter scored it at 177 2/8 points. For two decades that was good enough to stand as the number one typical whitetail for Virginia, and it still ranks today as one of the finest bucks ever taken in the Old Dominion.

If you bag a large buck that you think might qualify for the record books, the first proving ground to try out your trophy is the Virginia Big Game Trophy contest. This event is sponsored by the Virginia Game Commission, the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, and the Rockingham-Harrisonburg Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. Western and eastern regional contests are held each fall, with four categories for deer, plus awards for exceptional black bear and wild turkeys. All entries must have been bagged in Virginia with a legal sporting weapon during the 1983-84 hunting season, and the big game check tag must accompany the entry.

The eastern contest will take place September 21 and 22, 1984, at the Julius Conn Gymnasium in downtown Newport News, on 29th Street, between Huntington Avenue and Warwick Boulevard. For more information, contact Charles A. Rogers, President, Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, 638 Creasy Avenue, Newport News, Virginia 23601, or phone 804/595-7192, or 596-7668.

The western contest and state contest will be held October 5 and 6, 1984, at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds on US 11, 1.6 miles south of Exit 62 off Interstate 81. For more information, contact Boyd E. Skelton, President, Rockingham-Harrisonburg Chapter of The Izaak Walton League, 412 North Main St., Bridgewater, Virginia 22812, phone 703/828-3393. □





# Deer Hunter and Son

story by Larry Hart

illustrations by Phyllis Saroff

**D**eer hunter and son stood on the crest of a ridge overlooking the long sloping hillside below.

He was Gary Wayne, deer hunter, with the vision of an eagle, the hearing of a fox, deer blood coursing through his veins, able to spot a deer's antler 100 yards away through the thickest brush. Beside him was his 12-year-old son, Gary Don, novice, eyes watching for tracks, ears listening to the wind, thinking of hot chocolate, always seeing where deer were, but seldom where they are.

Then came the sound of rustling, the swish of brown, and finally, antlers. It was a nice buck crossing the hillside, more of a ghost than a deer, leaving 20 feet of undisturbed ground between tracks, with body flowing smoothly as only a buck running full tilt can do.

He was Gary Wayne, marksman, rifle to shoulder at first sound, safety off at first sight, deer centered in scope and sure to drop this deer with one perfect shot. Alongside was 12-year-old son, Gary Don, plinker, gun half up, safety forgotten, eye looking for scope, with no hope of shooting.

Realizing this was no deer for a novice, Gary Wayne fired the fatal shot. But, was he seeing more trees than deer? Was the deer dead but didn't know it? With one last chance he fired a second shot. At the crack of the gun, a tree shook, and hickory bark flew. Yes, the mighty deer hunter had hit a tree.

A good deer hunter checks every shot. Deer often don't show any signs of being hit. The first shot may have been

true, and Son needs to learn the ways of a sportsman.

He was Gary Wayne, tracker, remembering just where the deer crossed, able to walk to the very spot he shot, knowing to look for slight signs: a tuft of hair or a speck of blood; and able to follow the deer for 200 yards just from the few tracks left under the leaves. Alongside was son, Gary Don, learner, excited from the sight of a buck and the sound of shots, trusting that dad couldn't miss, and asking questions faster than the deer ran.

The first shot was finally located. Both red oak and hickory knew the taste of lead this day.

Years of preparation and careful instruction come down to a mere instant in a young boy's life—and neither he nor his father will be the same again.

The next morning, just as the pink of dawn faded, giving the false impression that the world will get warmer as the sun rises, the youngster gently whispered to his dad, "See the deer up on the hill." Being a good deer hunter, Gary Wayne slowly turned his head toward the direction indicated rather than making any sudden movement. As he turned, he noticed Gary Don already had his rifle up and was looking through the scope.

He was Gary Don, aspiring young deer hunter, improving vision, sharper hearing, heartbeats becoming audible and buck fever about to set in. Alongside sat Gary Wayne, humbled father, with visions of the deer missed yesterday in his mind, misgivings at the prospect of missing another deer while being watched by the youngster, and having trouble locating the deer under observation.

Finally Gary Wayne saw the deer. There was one doe, no two, then movement behind them. Yes, a third deer, and it was a buck!

# "The year of carrying a BB gun, and the following year an unloaded rifle, had presented plenty of time to instruct and encourage."

"Can I shoot?" was the next whisper uttered by the youngster. "No, they're too far away; let them get a little closer," was the hushed answer.

He was Gary Don, aspiring young marksman, trying to hold the rifle still, waiting for a good shot, with patience, responsibility, and sportsmanship beginning to grow. Alongside sat Gary Wayne, anxious, crosshairs on a standing buck, wanting to shoot, wanting to wait for Gary Don to get his first shot, with this unusual situation rapidly bringing on a second case of buck fever.

At that moment, the decision was made for him. The buck turned and started leaping in the other direction. Again, realizing the youngster had little chance of hitting the deer, Gary Wayne fired one more wood-cutting shot. Before the report of the rifle had faded away, Gary Don also fired a shot. The sounds of scurrying deer on the hillside caused Gary Wayne to look over his rifle scope to see two other bucks running down the hillside. The deer in front suddenly folded and skidded to a stop while the other one disappeared in the brush.

He was Gary Don, excited young deer hunter, finally getting to shoot, but not really knowing who hit the deer, or why dad shot after just telling him not to shoot. Alongside sat Gary Wayne, awed, knowing Son must have hit the deer, knowing he must have missed, with disappointment and euphoria tugging at his heart at the same time.

Gary Wayne's hand just caught his son's shoulder in time to keep him from springing to his feet and running to the downed deer. "Watch him a minute to make sure he doesn't get back up," were the words of experience whispered to the young deer hunter, followed a few moments later by, "Check your safety." The wise maneuver of making a slow and cautious approach to a downed deer proved unnecessary this time. The six-point buck had been cleanly killed with a single bullet through the chest. A check of the area of Gary Wayne's shot yielded no evidence of a hit. A quick conference over the downed deer pieced the story together. From the first moment, Gary Wayne and Gary Don had

been looking at different bucks. Gary Wayne shot as his deer turned to hop away, while the buck Gary Don watched stood still. Gary Don's shot was true and sent the buck he shot at, and a third unnoticed buck running down the hillside. The wounded buck fell while the third buck unknowingly took advantage of the confusion to dart out of sight in the undergrowth.

He was Gary Don, young marksman, skills finally tested, bullet true at 110 yards, one deer shot at, one deer taken. Alongside was Gary Wayne, proven marksman, 18 kills to his credit, difficult shots successful in earlier years, but with nothing to show this year but empty brass and splintered wood.

Gary Don finished the field dressing chores under the direction of Gary Wayne, and both deer hunters returned to camp with the deer, where young Gary Don relived the scene a hundred times as he stared at the deer on the pole. As Granddad, uncles and hunting companions returned to camp, the young deer hunter told and retold the story, followed by handshakes, slaps on the back, and ultimately the taking of dad's shirt tail. When the deer was taken from the pole to be hauled to the check station by Gary Wayne and Gary Don, the rest of the hunters saw something a little different from just a tired little boy taking his first deer home to show Mom.

The year of carrying a BB gun, and the following year of carrying an unloaded rifle had presented plenty of time for

Dad and Granddad to instruct and encourage the youngster. Many hours of back porch discussion and in-the-field instruction had led up to the mere instant required to bag his first buck. This deer was more than just beginner's luck, and those hours of instruction and companionship led to what the others saw as the two drove away.

For he was Gary Don, deer hunter, courteous, respectful, safe and caring for the sport. While alongside sat Dad, Gary Wayne, proud, thoughts of missed deer vanished, with joy in his heart at having just lived a deer hunting experience that surpassed both his first and biggest deer. And we all know he will alter the story as he tells it by stretching his chest and saying, "Taught the kid everything he knows!" □

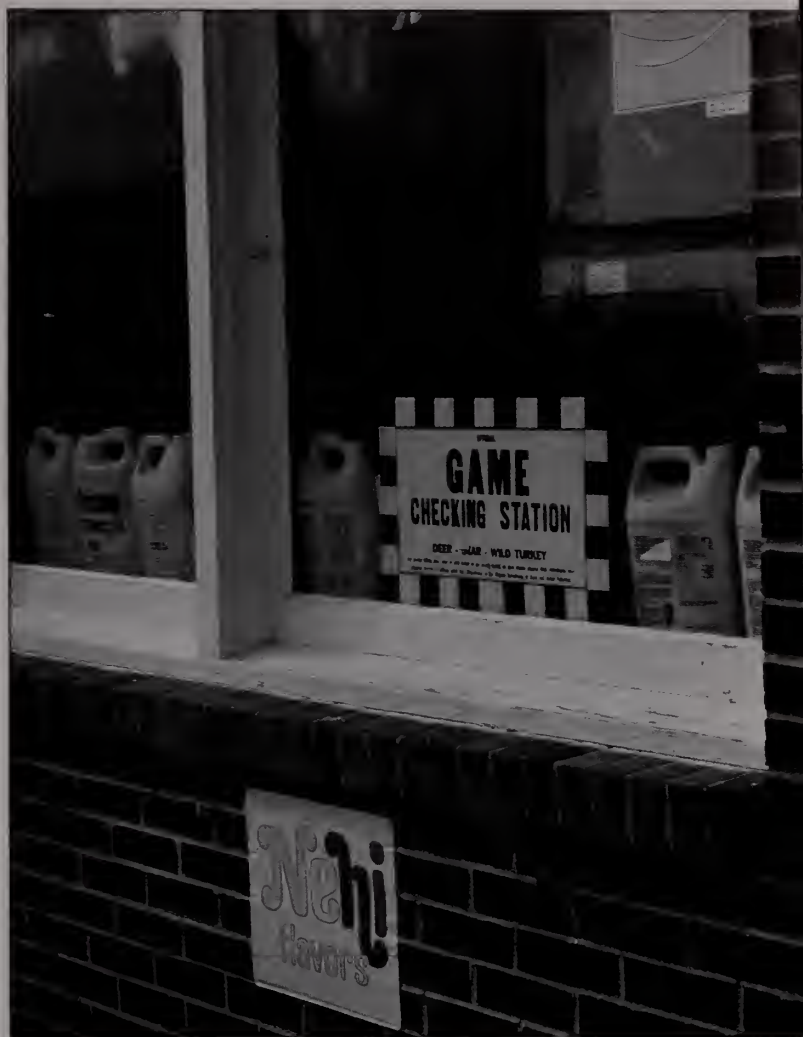




# RULES of the Game

It's essential for sportsmen to know the hunting, fishing and boating regulations that affect them, but it's also important to know how those regulations are made, because you can have a voice in the process.

by Jack Randolph



Sarah Bartenstein

*Hunters are required to tag their big game and take it to a Game Commission check station such as this one in Amelia County (above). Here, biologists gather data on which to base the recommendations they make to the 10-member Commission (below left).*



F.N. Satterlee

When Virginia's sportsmen take to the fields, waters and woods of the Commonwealth, they are required to know and obey a cook's mixture of federal, state and county laws as well as a considerable number of Game Commission regulations. Most of the more important laws and regulations are compiled in two brochures published by the Commission, the Summary of Game Laws and the Summary of Fishing Laws. Two supplements to the game law summary, one for webless migratory gamebirds and one for migratory waterfowl, are published as soon as those regulations are set each summer.

## ***State Laws: The Code of Virginia***

The state laws that relate to hunting, fishing and trapping are found under Title 29 of the Code of Virginia. These laws include those that create the Game Commission and give it authority to regulate the taking of game and fish. They set the prices of the various licenses and permits and provide for the expenditures of the funds. In a few isolated instances, hunting seasons are set by law. All of these laws are enacted by the General Assembly.

Also included in the Code are laws relating to the types of firearms that can be used for hunting. Laws relating to the legal means by which fish and game may be taken, laws relating to protecting one's crops from damage by wildlife, and many others.

Under Title 62 of the Code are the laws regulating recreational boating in the Commonwealth. There are also several local acts relating to hunting and fishing in various counties and cities.

Sportsmen are most interested in the regulations pertaining to the setting of seasons and bag limits in the Commonwealth. With a few exceptions, these are set by the Game Commission, and in some cases, under the guidance of the federal government.

Game can be roughly divided into three categories: game resident to Virginia, migratory waterfowl, and web-less migratory birds.

### ***Resident Game***

The seasons for resident game, which include deer, bear, turkey, rabbit, squirrel, quail, fox, grouse, and several furbearers, are set every two years by the Game Commission. In 1985 the season will be set for the 1985-86 and 1986-87 seasons.

The process for setting these seasons is a continuing one. The Commission's game division is continually gathering data concerning the condition of our wild game populations. Using such data as harvest statistics from previous seasons, studies of parasite loads in wildlife, necropsies of wild animals to determine their physical condition, average weights of birds and animals taken, hunter survey data, personal observations of the field staff, letters and comments received from farmers, foresters and sportsmen, examination of habitat conditions and many other forms of data, the game division compiles an accurate assessment of the populations of game birds and animals throughout the Commonwealth.

Other techniques, such as running quail and dove call surveys and aerial head counts also provide data, all of which are assembled and analyzed. The Game Division holds a series of meetings through the state each winter, gathering more data and hearing the views of their professional observers.

Using these data, the game division prepares proposals for hunting seasons and bag limits which are presented to the 10-member Commission at an open hearing, usually in February.

This two-day meeting usually attracts hundreds of sportsmen from all corners of the Commonwealth. Many come representing various sportsmen's organizations, but there are also many who are simply interested individuals.



Lou Hinshelwood



VCGIF photo

*Biologists use a variety of methods to gather important information on game populations, including (top) duck banding and (bottom) examination of deer that are brought to check stations, as well as statistics on the number of deer killed, their age, sex, etc.*

The Commission devotes the first of the two days to obtaining comments from the public. Under the format of this meeting, all present first hear the biologists' views concerning a given species to include the proposed seasons and bag limits. Then the Commission may ask questions of the biologists and the public has the same prerogative. Those who care to speak on a given issue are allotted a set period of time to make their comments, all of which are given consideration by the Commission members. Written comments received at this time through the mail are also carefully reviewed.

During the second day of the meeting, the public is invited to attend but public comments are not taken unless specifically solicited by a Commissioner. It is on this day that the Commission votes on each proposed regulation. At this point, however, the proposals accepted by the Commission remain only as proposals. Following the meeting and at least thirty days before the next Commission meeting, the proposals accepted by the Commission are advertised statewide. During this period the public is encouraged to mail in their comments.





Mel White



Sarah Bartenstein

*Biologists participating in a rail nesting study (top). It's important for hunters, fishermen and boaters to know the laws and regulations affecting their sports, so that a routine check by the local Virginia game warden doesn't spoil a day in the outdoors (bottom).*

The Commission meets again in late April or early May to reconsider the proposals made at the February meeting. This is also an open hearing and public comment is welcome on each issue the Commission then considers. If a proposal is accepted by vote of the Commission, it then becomes a regulation. If one is rejected, the regulation in force on that subject before the proposal was made remains in effect. Because of the requirement to advertise proposals statewide 30 days prior to the meeting, no new proposals concerning the hunting seasons and bag limits can be entertained at this meeting. There would also be insufficient time to print the Summary of Game Laws if the process were to extend any later into the year.

Immediately following the approval of the hunting seasons and bag limits, the Commission staff commences the process of assembling and printing the new laws. The target date for completing this project is the first of July.

### ***Migratory Birds and Waterfowl***

The seasons and bag limits for migratory waterfowl and webless migratory birds are set annually. These must be

set within a framework promulgated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, furnished just before the annual meeting.

Webless migratory birds include such species as doves, woodcock, rails and snipe. Each July the Commission receives a framework from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This framework establishes the earliest opening date, the latest closing date, the number of hunting days, bag limits, shooting hours and other limitations. When the Commission meets, it must establish a season that falls within the parameters of the framework.

Waterfowl seasons are set in August, also under a federal framework. The procedure is identical to the one for webless migratory birds.

### ***Fishing, Boating and Hunting Arms***

Fishing and boating regulations are considered every other year, usually in August with the follow-up meeting in October. The same process employed for hunting regulations is followed.

The laws governing the hunting arms permissible for use in the various counties are a combination of state laws enacted by the General Assembly and county ordinances. The same is true for laws regulating hunting and trapping along public roads. Some 26 counties and cities have ordinances relating to distances one can hunt or trap from a road. The counties and cities also enact ordinances relating to carrying loaded rifles and shotguns in vehicles or on public roads.

### ***How to Get Involved***

The Commission encourages the public to participate in the regulatory process, either by attending the public hearings or expressing your views in writing. In February or early March of odd numbered years the Commission will entertain proposals for hunting and trapping resident game and furbearers. These proposals will again be considered the following April or May. The regulations for the dove season are considered at the July meeting and waterfowl regulations are set every August.

During odd-numbered years, the Commission will prepare proposed changes to fishing and boating laws in August, reconsidering them again in October.

Issues of interest to sportsmen are also taken up by the General Assembly each year. The legislature welcomes public input at the Committee hearings as each of these issues is heard.

As the federal frameworks are developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service they are printed in the *Federal Register* and the public is offered the opportunity to submit comments in writing or to attend public hearings, usually in Washington, D.C.

Of course, issues of interest to sportsmen may come up at the county or city level from time to time. County or city residents can make their views known to the board of supervisors or city council at the appropriate time.

Involvement in the regulatory process by the public helps those who are charged with the responsibility of making laws and regulations do a better job. The public should do its best to become informed concerning the issues of the day and through its participation, help the law and regulation makers do the best job possible. □



# Best Bets for Early Ducks

story and photos by Gerald Almy

Hunters who break with  
tradition find the early October season  
can mean more ducks than any other time.



One decade ago, opening day of duck season. It's a cold, bleak November day when the waterfowl season marches in. Trees along the marshes are skeletal and bare. The brightly painted foliage of autumn has turned brown. Leaves have cracked and withered on their branches, tumbling to the water like confetti. The swamps have taken on a deep brown hue with tannic acids from the decaying leaves. Raw, wind-swept skies hold a promise of sleet, maybe even a sprinkling of snow in their leaden pulse—and that stirs the soul of the duck hunter. For him, this is the epitome of classic waterfowling weather. With any luck, the inclement conditions will have driven the first flights of fat-breasted greenheads, blacks, gadwalls and widgeon down from the North Country on their way south to gentler climes, providing the perfect inauguration for a cold, late season of duck hunting.

Ten years ago, that would have been a typical scene for the opening of duck season in Virginia, which normally took place late in the year, in the last half of November. All that's changed now. True, the diehard waterfowler still spends many a frigid winter day in the blind waiting for big migrating ducks from Canada to drop into his spread of decoys, but the *opening segment* of duck hunting in the Old Dominion is now a decidedly different affair. For the last eight years, waterfowling has begun during the first week of October, when leaves are just taking on the first precocious hint of autumn's color and killing frosts are still weeks away. Temperatures often broach the 70's, even 80's during the day, and the major flights of big ducks migrating south from Canada still lie a month or more away.

To traditionalists—and waterfowling surely has its share of that breed—the first early October duck season, held for two days in 1976, was sheer blasphemy. But to more pragmatic-minded hunters, the October season was a godsend. While it's true that major migrations of big ducks have seldom begun at this time, early flights of green and bluewinged teal are often encountered, and hunters soon discovered that there were also plenty of locally-bred ducks available in early October—mallards, blacks, and most important of all, woodies.

Nearly exterminated at the turn of the century as a result of swamp draining, excessive logging off bottomland forests, and market hunting, wood ducks fell to such low numbers that hunting for them was outlawed throughout the country for over two decades. The season reopened in 1941 with a modest one bird limit in 14 states. Since then, the wood duck has enjoyed a spectacular resurgence in numbers, thanks to sound wildlife management policies and a variety of contributing factors, including a reduction in the rate of habitat destruction, strict controls on hunting, the widespread use of artificial nest boxes, the renaissance of the beaver (which builds ponds in wooded areas that these ducks use for nesting and rearing young), and a surge in the construction of farm ponds.

Wood duck numbers now stand at over 1½ million, and Virginia has one of the heaviest breeding populations of these birds of any state. Before the early duck season was instigated, however, Virginia hunters had an opportunity to harvest relatively few of these exquisite waterfowl that nested and lived in the state throughout most of the year. The problem was that by the time the traditional waterfowl season opening arrived in late November, most of the woodies

had already headed south for warmer wintering grounds.

To allow southeastern states to harvest some of these burgeoning populations of woodies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered certain states new early-October seasons, to take place before most of the resident birds had fled south. The results of these early seasons have been excellent, allowing states such as Virginia to harvest additional numbers of the wood ducks they nurtured and reared on their lands, without hurting the overall populations of the birds.

During the two years immediately before the first early duck season was held in Virginia, a combined total of 13,000 wood ducks were bagged, according to Virginia Game Division waterfowl biologist Charlie Gilchrist. The very first time the October hunt was tried (lasting just two days that year, in 1976) the harvest of woodies equalled the previous two-year figure of 13,000 birds. The following year the October season was increased from two to four days and 26,000 woodies were bagged. Since then, the four-day October season has been held regularly and the wood duck harvest has never fallen below 22,000, with a high of up to 37,000. Since the early four-day season has been in effect, 72 percent of all wood ducks

*Float hunting on the Shenandoah River is productive during the early split.*





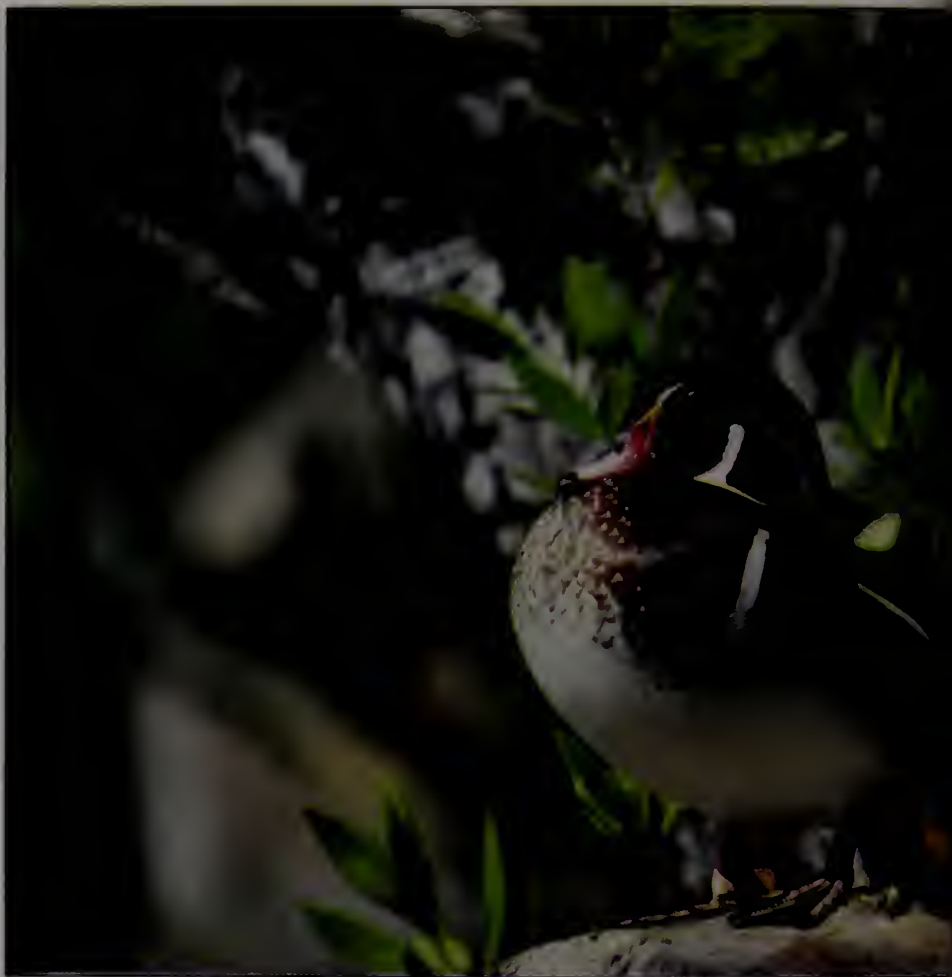
have been killed during this brief October segment. So important has this early woodie harvest become in the Virginia duck hunting picture that these birds now rank as the number one duck in the state, edging out mallards as the most frequently bagged fowl during the last two seasons.

Even crotchety traditionalists are beginning to admit that those four hunting days in October, normally held sometime between the 3rd and the 11th, offer some of the liveliest and most productive waterfowling of the year. Just how fertile the early season is shows up in the harvest figures Gilchrist has assembled from hunter surveys. Would you believe, say, 300 percent more productive than the rest of the season on a ducks-per-hunting-day basis? It's true. During the past three years, according to Gilchrist, the four days in October comprised nine percent of the duck hunting season. Yet these four days accounted for 26 percent of all ducks bagged for the entire waterfowl season! The other 91 percent of the season length accounted for only 72 percent of the total harvest.

Not only are there many more wood ducks around in October than during the traditional late duck seasons in November, December and January, they also carry a lower point value for this early segment. Instead of their 70-point value during later seasons, woodies carry a 25-point designation during the early season, so it's possible to bag a four bird limit of these succulent 1½ pound birds whose mast and corn-nourished flesh matches the best table fare.

While certain areas in Virginia offer good chances for teal, mallards and stray blacks during October, most hunters home in on the abundant populations of locally-grown woodies in planning their hunts and consider other ducks as a pleasant bonus. Wood ducks can be found throughout the entire state wherever there is shallow, secluded water and mature trees.

**B**asic types of water in Virginia that provide early duck hunting include lakes, ponds, marshes, rivers and streams. The biggest lakes in the state such as Kerr, Gaston, Smith Mountain and Anna can provide excellent big duck hunting during later seasons, but they're comparatively poor bets for the early wood duck season. Woodies like more secluded areas, and they don't like



*Wood ducks are the most commonly bagged birds during the four-day October season. Virginia has one of the heaviest breeding populations of these ducks.*

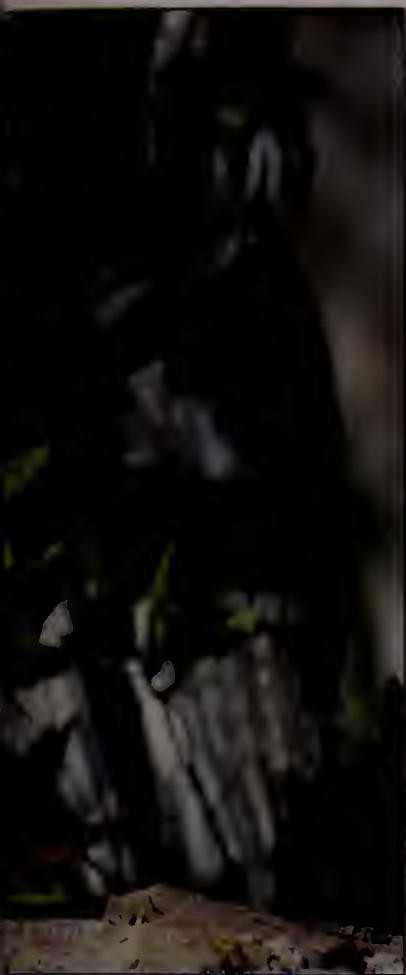
clean, deep impoundments. Size is not the problem so much as their openness, lack of timber, excessive depth, and traffic from boaters and fishermen. A few woodies are available during the early season on Back Bay, as well as some early-migrating teal, widgeon and mallards. But you'll find more fishermen on this big inland sound than hunters in October. Most guides and the three public hunting areas run by the Game Commission don't even open shop for the short four-day October segment.

Chickahominy Lake, east of Richmond, is a fairly large lake that does have the shallow water and timber woodies crave, and it can offer good wood duck prospects in October. Watch out for fishermen, though, and be sure you've secured the proper blind permits and permission from private landowners.

Beaverdams, secluded farm ponds, floodplain potholes, swamps and small lakes in wooded areas are far better bets for woodies than the large impoundments, and some of my most

cherished waterfowling experiences have taken place on these miniature stillwater habitats. Every body of water of this type won't hold ducks, but by doing enough scouting, driving, hiking and consulting topo maps before the season opens you can pinpoint plenty of ponds, swamps and beaverdams to keep you busy during the short four-day hunting period. And many of the experiences you have on these small, private waters will etch themselves permanently in your memory bank with their richness. I've flushed as many as 100 woodies off ponds covering barely an acre. I've had woodies flush so thick that two shots brought down a limit of four birds. And I've hunkered down beneath camouflage netting and watched the sky above come alive with hordes of swirling woodies that I've flushed off a pond as they circle lower and lower, checking out their resting spots, then backpeddling in for a splashdown. Sometimes I've been so mesmerized by these spectacular early October wood duck shows





William Lea

that I've forgotten to raise my gun and shoot, or on other occasions simply chose not to—so entrancing was the scene that I dared not break the spell with a shot.

**T**here are two good methods for hunting these ponds, beaverdams and marshes. The most obvious tactic is to jump shoot the ducks, sneaking up cautiously to within 20 or 30 yards and then flushing the birds off. This makes for exciting shooting, not unlike firing at a rising covey of quail—only these quail weigh 1½ pounds apiece. Bring a retriever, waders, or a short fishing rod and lure to snag fallen birds and work them to shore. If you know of several spots that hold birds and offer enough cover to sneak into gunning range, this is a sure way to bag a limit of early season ducks.

Recently I've found myself favoring a different approach on pond and marsh woodies. I'll either get into the

area before daylight and wait, or flush the ducks off a body of water and wait for them to return. You don't need a blind for this hunting—just hide behind natural cover, or carry a piece of camouflage material and drape it over you and wait. Unless the birds have been shot at recently, they'll likely start filtering back within 10 to 30 minutes, craning their necks and circling as they look for danger, then finally descending into gun range. This prolongs and increases the drama and theater of the hunt over the more direct jump shooting method. But of course, every now and then you'll flush birds off, and watch them disappear never to return again. Then you'll kick yourself for not jump shooting. But that's the gamble you take with this approach.

You can put out a few decoys—mallards or woodies—but they're usually not necessary. If you do



Ranny Isenberg admires a woodie that fell to his 12-gauge.

decide to use decoys, though, attach a jerk string to one of them and twitch it when the woodies come back close enough to see it. This will pull them in like magic. I saw this technique work time after time on wary late season wood ducks in Mississippi last January while hunting with three-time world champion caller Mike McLemore. Mike can call as well as any man alive, but the woodies even ignored him. Just twitch that jerk string, though, and make the decoy bob and the woodies would glide in like jets landing at an airport.

**T**he vast network of rivers and streams that cut vein-like patterns across Virginia's landscape offer superb wood duck hunting. Size of the flowage is seldom a critical factor. I've found woodies on creeks so small a long-legged farm boy could leap across them. I've also encountered wood ducks on lower reaches of the broad James and Potomac Rivers.

You can set out decoys and use a jerk string on the open stretches of big rivers and enjoy very good October duck hunting. But you should concentrate your hunting on the first and last hour of daylight and know from advance scouting which areas the ducks are using before setting up.

Two more commonly employed approaches for early ducks on Virginia's flowing waters are jump shooting and float hunting. Jump shooting is especially useful on small wooded creeks with brushy shores and elevated banks. Ease along quietly staying back from the edge of the stream, but loop in close to the bank every now and then and be prepared for a flush. Sometimes the ducks will hide right beneath an undercut bank or log and you'll have to practically step on them to make them fly. Other times they'll get up at the outer limits of shotgun range or beyond.

Listen intently as you stalk, because you'll sometimes hear the birds before you can see them. I once snuck up on a group of about 30 woodies that I heard squawking and splashing near a riffle long before I saw them. At the flush, my double 12-gauge brought down two handsome drakes. Camouflage clothing will help you get closer to the ducks without being seen, and sometimes a pair of 6X or 7X binoculars come in handy for checking out water far upstream in open areas. Either wait till the ducks fly back over land before you shoot, or figure out beforehand how you're going to retrieve them. It's usually warm enough in October that I simply wear sneakers or wading shoes and plunge in after the birds if they happen to fall into the stream.

If rivers have sufficient volume of flow when the October opener rolls around, float hunting can offer an exciting way to bag woodies, plus stray mallards and teal. A johnboat or canoe will work, but it should be painted a drab natural color such as flat gray or olive, or better still, camouflaged. I also like to tie a bundle of branches and brush on the





*Setting out decoys at dawn in a misty marsh (top). For wood ducks, rig one of your decoys with a jerk string, then bob the decoy when woodies fly into view. (Above) A Chesapeake retriever heads out to pick up a fallen wood duck.*

front of my boat before embarking on a float hunt, to break up my outline and further camouflage the craft. It's best for two people to share a boat for float hunting ducks, with the man in the rear doing mostly paddle work and the bow person doing the bulk of the shooting. The person in the rear can either keep their gun unloaded, for safety's sake, or keep it loaded but pointed away from the bow man and use it only on ducks that flare back upstream. Both hunters should be camouflaged, as should the paddle. Use only a soft sculling motion to steer the boat.

On large, open stretches of river,

lots of ducks will flush out of range. However, some will hang tight until you get within 40 yards. With a quick shot and 3-inch magnums, these birds are fair game. On curling, twisting streams with fallen logs and brush-piles along shore, you can sometimes float right up on top of wood ducks in October. This is especially true if the rivers are running full from heavy rains, which is my favorite time for float hunting. The ducks get in among the flooded trees along shore and you can sneak up close for clean shots. At bends in the river, hug the inside corner edge, so you can get as close as possible to ducks that might be hanging around the turn. A good

stretch of river for a day's float would be six to 12 miles, unless the water is flowing fast from heavy rains. Then you might want to cover 15 to 20 miles on a dawn-to-dusk trip.

If a river is considered "navigable," you don't need the landowner's permission to float hunt ducks, but you do need his permission to shoot squirrels you see along the banks or to get out and stalk ducks on land. To hunt rivers east of Interstate 95 you must possess a "floating blind" permit. These sell for \$20 from the Game Commission, Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230, 804/257-1000. On waters west of I-95, no blind permit is required to float hunt rivers. Everyone needs a current hunting license, and a federal duck stamp, available at post offices for \$7.50.

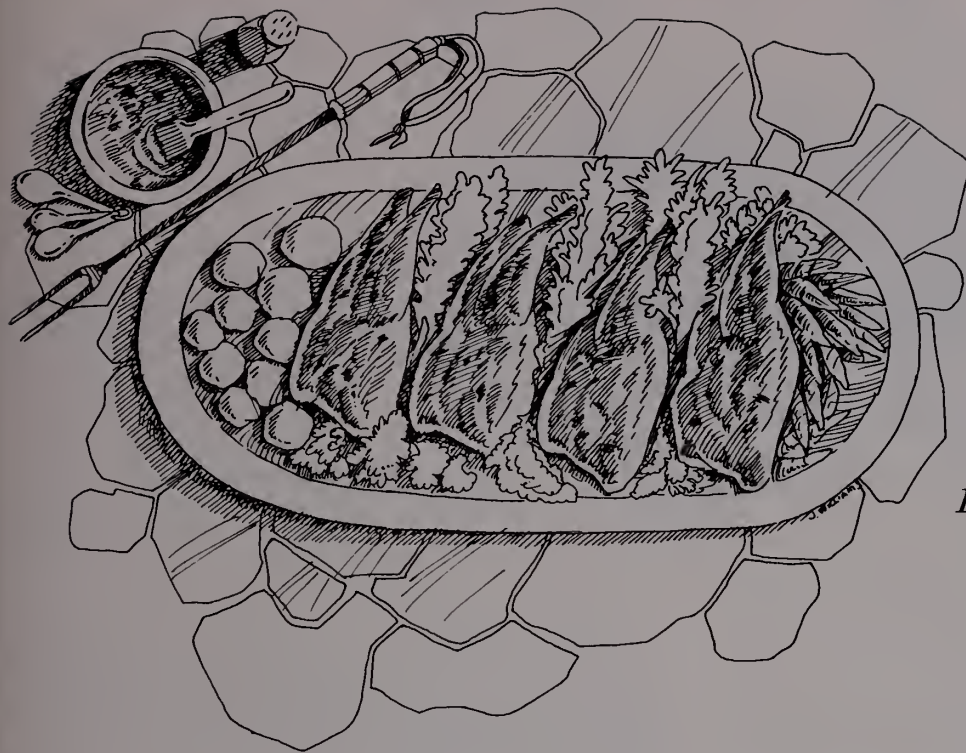
The Shenandoah is one of the state's premier waterfowl rivers, with its north, south and main forks covering several hundred miles. The Rappahannock River in north-central Virginia offers excellent early October duck prospects from around Remington at the US 15-29 Bridge all the way to the state landing just west of Fredericksburg. The Rapidan, a major feeder of the Rap, offers several good duck shooting floats from US 522 down to its confluence with the Rappahannock. The James is excellent for wood ducks in October and you'll also find a surprising number of mallards and blacks here. Good float hunting is available from near Eagles' Nest down to Richmond. The Roanoke River is most famous for its striper run out of Kerr Reservoir in springtime, but plenty of ducks use this river, too. It's good from the tailwaters of Leesville Lake, near Altavista, southeast all the way to Kerr.

Before planning a float hunt, check with locals and find out if there are any tricky whitewater stretches you should be wary of, and purchase topo maps. You can obtain the state index map for Virginia free from the U.S. Geological Survey, Distribution Branch, 1200 S. Eads Street, Arlington, Virginia 22202; then order the individual topos you need from this.

**A**lthough you won't find the cold, gray, dreary weather that seems to add a unique aesthetic touch to late season duck hunts during early October outings, for putting woodies in the bag and savoring a final taste of delightful Indian summer weather, the four duck hunting days on tap early this month are hard to beat. □

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE





*Bing's Barbeque Duck*

by *Annette Bignami*  
illustrations by *Jack Williams*

# *Wild Duck Delicacies*

*Recipes for  
ducks—large or  
small, young or  
old, gourmet  
meals or simple  
fare. The idea is  
to use all the  
game you bag to  
the fullest.*

**F**ew dishes rank with properly prepared wild duck. Preparation starts with careful drawing after the day's hunt, before you remove the feathers. There are two methods for doing this: either pick feathers and singe pinfeathers, or dip ducks into hot paraffin floated on boiling water and strip off feathers and wax in sheets. It's faster to simply skin ducks, but some people prefer to cook them with the skin on. If you want to enjoy ducks between seasons, freeze them in water-filled half-gallon milk containers; this prevents freezer burn, and you can stack them like bricks in your freezer to save space.

We also segregate ducks by size, species and age, using younger, tender ducks for broiling and old birds in soups or

stews. We serve bigger ducks in halves or quarters and small ducks whole and utilize "well shot" duck parts in stews, soups or other recipes. We waste nothing! Our motto is "If you shoot it, eat it all."

Be aware that young wild ducks have a rich blood supply and little fat, so are best cooked rapidly at high heat until they look like rare to medium-rare roast beef. If you cook them until they're brown all the way through, they get tough. Older ducks (check for stiff bills) tenderize if simmered in liquid to prevent drying out. Recipes aimed at rendering fat from overstuffed domestic ducks yield dry, tasteless wild birds. With these points in mind, let's look at some kitchen tested recipes.



*Roast Lemon Duck*

### Duck Soup

This is a nice way to use leftover duck parts and vegetables past their prime. It can be used as a soup to warm cold hunters, or as the basis for duck stock that improves sauces.

- |                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 duck carcasses               | 1 medium-size tomato        |
| 1 medium-size onion, quartered | 6 to 8 peppercorns          |
| 2 celery stalks, sliced        | $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt |
| 1 carrot, sliced               | 1 bay leaf                  |

Put ingredients in a large pot and cover with water; then bring to a boil over high heat. Lower heat and simmer for 3 hours, skimming as needed.

Note: you can add green beans, cabbage or most other vegetables and/or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup rice during the last hour if you want a hearty soup.

Stock Variation: after soup cooks, drain vegetables, boil soup to reduce volume by half and store stock in ice cube trays. Freeze, remove from trays and store loose in plastic bags in your freezer until needed for stock. Note: check your tray's cube size; 6 to 8 cubes usually equal one cup.

### Bing's BBQ Duck

- |                             |                                      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 ducks, split              | 2 green onions, chopped              |
| 1 cube butter               | $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon seasoned salt |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soy sauce |                                      |

Melt butter and add soy sauce, onions and seasoned salt; mix well and pour over ducks. Marinate 3 to 4 hours at room temperature, turning ducks every hour. Then, skin side down, cook ducks on charcoal or propane grill, or oven broil or fry ducks at high heat, 8 to 10 minutes. Cover your grill or smoker to increase the smoky flavor if you like. Then turn ducks and cook 6 to 8 minutes more. Total time depends on duck size. Small ducks such as teal might take 2 minutes less per side, but the second side *always* takes 2 minutes less than the first. Note: duck meat appears rare when duck is done. Serve as soon as possible on warm plates. Serves 4.

### Duck Supreme

If you have ducks that were badly shot up going away, this recipe is an excellent way to use the breasts. Use the remaining parts in soups or stocks.

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 4 duck breasts, skinned and boned | $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour           | 6 tablespoons butter          |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt       |                               |

#### Wine Sauce

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 tablespoon shallots, chopped             | $\frac{1}{2}$ cup duck or chicken stock |
| 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, finely chopped | 1 tablespoon arrowroot (optional)       |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Madeira                  |   |

Combine flour, salt and pepper. Roll duck breasts in seasoned flour until lightly coated. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat and cook duck breasts until golden brown, about 7 minutes on the first side and 5 minutes on the second. Remove cooked breasts to a covered, warm platter. Keep warm.

Prepare sauce by adding other ingredients to the pan and either reduce liquid by one-half over high heat until sauce coats a spoon, or thicken with arrowroot.

This is great with a mix of brown and wild rice or on noodles tossed with butter and poppy seeds.

*Duck Soup*





## Duck Salad

### Duck Salad

Duck salads made with leftover meat from soup, stock or barbecued duck provide excellent summer entrées or impressive early courses for gourmet meals.

- 1 cup left-over duck, shredded
- 1 head of lettuce
- 1 small red onion, sliced

Tear lettuce into bite-size pieces and top with duck and onion slices. Refrigerate until ready to serve, then add sesame dressing and serve immediately.

#### Sesame Dressing

- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon MSG
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients and refrigerate until ready to serve.

### Mandarin Duck Salad

This exceptional salad makes a lovely formal lunch and suits dinners as a light entrée; it's more filling than you might expect.

- 1 cup leftover duck, shredded
- 1 bunch fresh spinach
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 6 $\frac{1}{4}$  ounce can Mandarin orange slices, drained
- 1 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup roasted, sliced almonds

Tear spinach leaves into bite-size pieces, removing stems. Add duck, onion, mushrooms, almonds and Mandarin oranges; toss and refrigerate until ready to serve.

#### Onion Salad Dressing

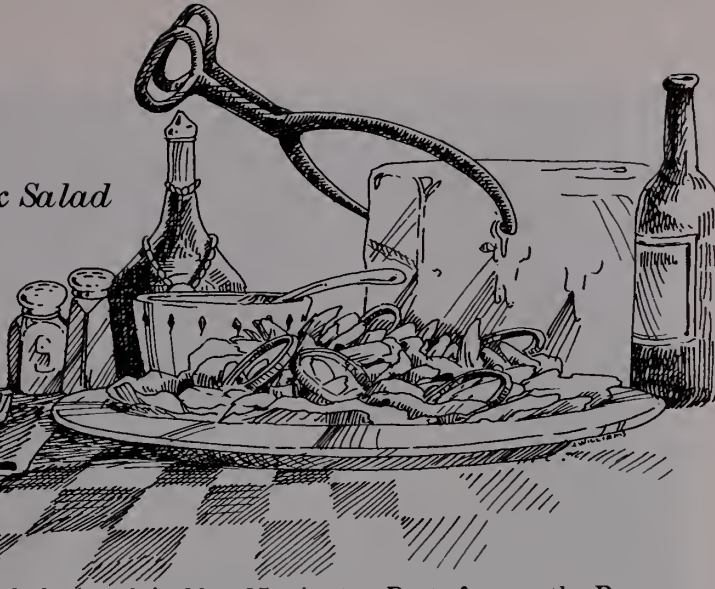
- 1 tablespoon onion juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup red wine vinegar
- salt and pepper to taste

Combine and refrigerate ingredients until ready to serve.

### Roast Lemon Duck

- 1 large duck (whole or halved)
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons fresh mint, minced
- 3 tablespoons butter
- Juice and rind of 1 lemon
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup duck stock
- 1 lemon, sliced

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Melt 2 tablespoons butter and either inject it with a needle under duck skin in several places, or baste frequently during roasting. Mix 1 tablespoon of mint with remaining butter, grated lemon rind and juice. Rub this mixture inside the duck cavity and top with leftover butter. Roast whole duck in a rack over a pan for 40 to 50 minutes, or until skin is crisp and brown; duck



halves cook in 20 to 25 minutes. Baste frequently. Remove and split whole duck and place it on a warm platter. Boil down pan juices by half, add remaining mint and taste for seasoning. Turn off heat, add lemon slices and let warm for 1 to 2 minutes. Top duck with lemon slices and sauce.

### Smoked Duck

Smoked duck is a classic served alone or in summer salads, hors d'oeuvre trays and gourmet sandwiches.

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup soy sauce
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup white wine
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 duck
- hickory chips

Soak hickory chips in water. Mix brine ingredients and soak duck in brine for 6 hours. Rinse duck and dry it on a rack for 1 hour. Then smoke duck in smoker for 6 to 8 hours, or smoke it 4 hours, then remove it, foil wrap and bake until done in a 350-degree oven.

### Duck In Sour Cream

This recipe suits older ducks or a mix of undamaged parts from badly shot-up ducks.

- 2 ducks, in serving pieces
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon parsley, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon rosemary, finely chopped
- 1 cup rosé wine
- 1 cup sour cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Season flour with salt and pepper and coat duck pieces. Melt butter in a casserole and brown duck on all sides. Add shallots, parsley, rosemary leaves and wine. Cover and bake 45 to 50 minutes. Remove duck to a warm platter. Add sour cream to casserole and heat, but do not boil. Serve sauce over duck with a side dish of rice or buttered noodles and a simple salad, for a lovely meal that's easy to prepare. □

*Editor's note: These recipes and more are available in a spiral-bound, 32-page cookbook, Just Ducks. Send \$3.00 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling to: Biggie Publications, P.O. Box 622, Rough & Ready, California 95975. A companion volume, Just Pheasants, is available as well.*



# Meet Me at the Forks of the Creek

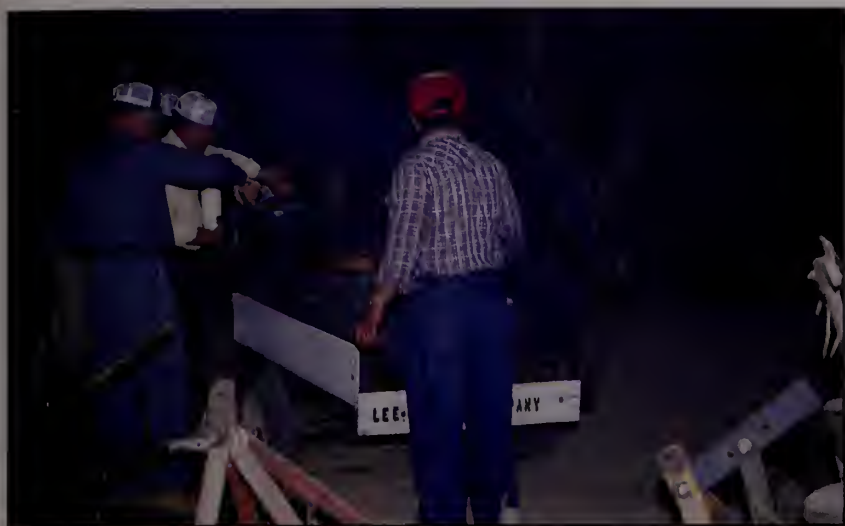
## Foxhound Field Trials

story and photos by  
Mel White and Herb Foster

**T**here's a lure to fox hunting, an intangible thing. It is perhaps like love—a difficult feeling to understand until you've tried it yourself. To cast hounds at dawn and listen to their music filtering through the first pink rays of sunrise stirs excitement in your soul. It's a special thrill that doesn't diminish with time and keeps you coming back . . . back to listen, to watch and to talk of hounds and the great chases they have had.

The photographs on these pages are part of the action and color at the Virginia State Foxhound Field Trial held last October at the Elm Hill Wildlife Management Area in Mecklenburg County.





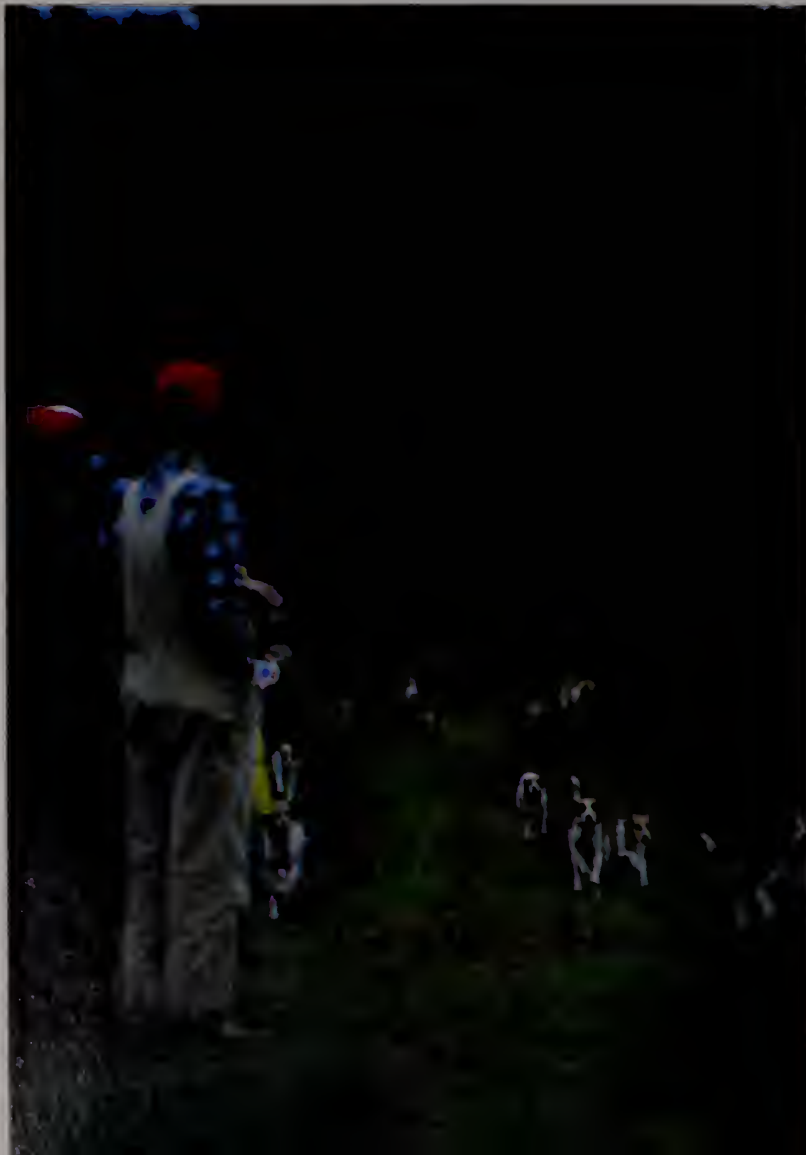
Food before foxes. Guests are served chicken al fresco in and around the barn at the Elm Hill Wildlife Management Area. The woodsmoke of the cooker fills the air as old friends meet, tell stories, and anticipate the hunt.



Big and proud, a walker fox hound stands alert for the judges. A bench show is held the evening before the first day's hunt and many of the dogs involved are show animals. Often bred for bench shows such as this, these dogs can appear larger than those who hunt and are judged for carriage and confirmation. Given the very best care at all times, the dogs are elaborately groomed before the show by the owners and handlers. Despite this apparent coddling before the show, the dogs, in order to qualify, must be cast (released) with the rest of the hounds at dawn.

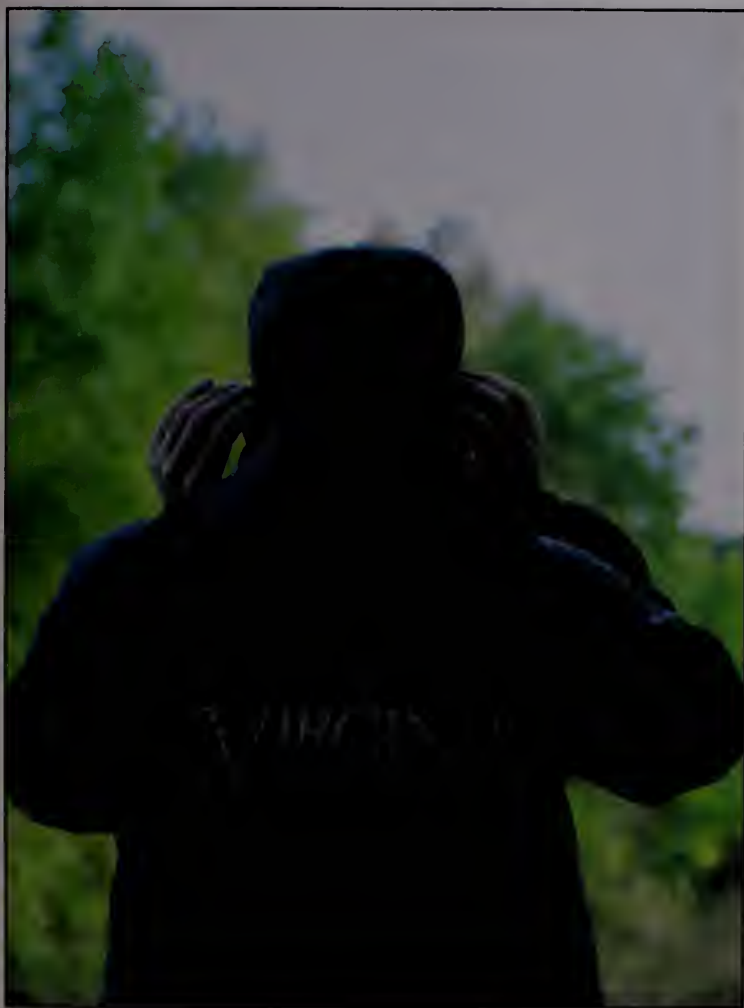


Casting the hounds just before daylight on the first of three days of the field trial. The dogs leaping from their boxes quickly begin a search for the scent. As they run down the road looking like the Hounds of Hell in our flash, the dogs will have five hours to show their ability at running a fox. Though soon on the trail, the dogs seldom actually catch the fox.



Just seconds behind the fox, the hounds follow its trail with amazing speed and endurance. The dogs are the focus of the field trial and their ability and desire for hunting, trailing, speed and endurance are the tests of champions. Some 98 percent of these hounds are Walkers. The balance are two similar breeds, the Trigg and July. All three varieties are bred to chase the wild fox—tame or captive foxes are never used in this type of fox hunting.





Judging a foxhound field trial takes years of practice, skill and patience. From the early hours of the morning much time is spent waiting and listening for dogs involved in a race. The dogs are followed by the judges on foot and on horseback or by car. Game wardens assist with the hunt, guiding and escorting judges. When dogs are seen, the judges are looking for dogs who are not performing. These dogs will be "scratched" for many reasons, including loafing, howling, babbling, rabbiting and other faults.





The master of hounds checks numbers painted or dyed on the sides of the dogs prior to the third morning's hunt. After the check-in, the dogs stand leashed but eager for yet another fox and a few hours on the trail.

Silver and ribbons, too, for the winners. By the final evening the judges have conferred, and through a somewhat complicated system, chosen the winners in several categories. Dogs come from a wide variety of kennels and homes, and some of the winners have several generations of a proud family behind them.





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# Hunting on Virginia's Military Areas

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The Old Dominion's three major bases—Quantico, A.P. Hill and Pickett—offer plenty of opportunity for the hunter.

story and photos by Gerald Almy



*Quail are just one of the many species hunters can find on Virginia's military areas; here, an English setter on point.*

I should have known better. But I'd been tramping along the boggy stream bottom for close to an hour without flushing a woodcock or finding any sign. When I saw the creamy-white splashing on the carpet of leaves I couldn't help bending down to touch it to see if it was wet and fresh. Just when I stooped over and determined that the droppings were indeed moist and only a few hours old, a large hen woodcock

flushed barely 10 feet in front of me, flew in a twisting, erratic pattern through the alders and escaped unharmed before I could stand up and fire a shot.

While distraught to have hunted an hour without seeing a bird and then flubbed my first chance by being unprepared, I was relieved to have found woodcock. The big hen bird didn't fly far. She could likely be reflushed. And I knew that where

you find one timberdoodle, you're likely to encounter more. Over the next hour and a half I not only relocated and bagged the first woodcock I jumped, but also found nine more as well. A crackerjack wingshot could have easily filled his limit with the number of birds present. I was happy, though, with the four birds I picketed that morning, and with the delightful experience of hunting an uncrowded stretch of woods on a gor-



(Left) Jim Clay calls turkeys. (Above) All three bases offer good squirrel hunting, including gray squirrels.

geous November day.

That hunt took place over a decade ago, and was my first try ever for woodcock on the U.S. Marine Corps base at Quantico in northern Virginia. But it was far from my first hunt ever on military lands, and a long ways from my last. With over 1½ million acres of national forest, thousands of acres of corporate lands, state forests, and a choice network of wildlife management areas all offering public hunting, Virginia's military lands often get overlooked by the newcomer looking for a place to pursue game in the state. And that's a shame, because the three major bases in the Old Dominion—Quantico, A.P. Hill and Pickett—offer some of the best public hunting opportunities available for large and small game, upland birds and waterfowl. True, there's a bit of red tape involved in hunting these areas. But the price is right (\$4 to hunt Quantico, \$5 for A.P. Hill and \$7 for Pickett), and as I found out on my woodcock foray and many other trips, the hunting can be excellent.

If you decide to try these bases, it's important to be aware that they have as their primary purpose the training and maintenance of the personnel and equipment to defend our country. If you keep this fact in mind, it's easy to understand why the hunting has to be tightly managed so that it doesn't interfere in any way with this fundamental *raison d'être* of the installations. But basically all that means for the hunter is that you must apply for a hunting permit once a year, check

in and out before and after your hunt, stay in the specific area you select, and at Quantico, listen to a hunter safety lecture. That's a relatively small price to pay for access to some of the finest hunting grounds in the state.

Not only do the military bases offer vast acreages of unexploited wildlife habitat, the land is also professionally managed by trained biologists, with assistance from the Virginia Game Commission in the form of fertilizers, seeds, management advice and game warden duty. Mast-bearing trees such as hickory, oak, and beechnut are nurtured. Clearings are created in dense stands of timber and then planted with game foods such as autumn olive, wheat and corn. Dove fields are maintained, and a mix of vegetation age classes provides plenty of productive edge cover. A well-kept network of roads throughout the bases provides easy access to the hunting grounds, and maps showing all of these roads as well as hunting area boundaries are provided when you check in.

While most of the bases are open six days a week for hunting during legal seasons, certain portions of the bases may be off-limits to hunters when military training is taking place. According to a spokesman at A.P. Hill, "scheduled training and range firing have priority over hunting at all times. Hunting areas are prescribed on a daily basis, which varies according to military requirements and game harvest quotas."

Always be alert for unexploded ammunition and open wells while hunting on military bases, though chances are you'll never come across these hazards. If you find a dud, you're requested to mark its location and report it to base personnel.

No rifles may be used on Quantico or Pickett, except for muzzleloaders, which are legal during deer season on Quantico. On A.P. Hill, .22 rifles are legal during the squirrel season, except when it overlaps with deer hunting season. Shotguns and bows and arrows are legal weapons on all bases. Hunters must wear a minimum of 500 square inches of blaze orange clothing on the upper body, including a hat, except during spring turkey and fall archery deer seasons. No dog hunting for deer is allowed on Quantico and A.P. Hill.

Deer hunting is the most popular fall sport on the base. And considering that some 84 percent of licensed hunters in Virginia go after white-tails each year, that's not surprising. Long lines start to form at the base by midnight the night before opening day and during doe seasons, even though it's usually 4 or 5 a.m. before military personnel begin to assign areas.

In an effort to cut down on these all-night waits, A.P. Hill has begun offering a pre-registration option. Hunters who live beyond a 50-mile radius from the base can register by mail for up to a two-day hunt period, a minimum of 10 days before the hunt. The written request must



*(Right) A hunter retrieves a downed woodcock. Hunting timberdoodles is most productive from late October through early December.*



*(Above) If this scene is any indication, the hunter who chooses one of the military areas will have ample opportunity to try his skill. In addition to whitetails and wild turkey, and the other game species pictured on these pages, these areas have huntable populations of rabbits, ruffed grouse, doves and waterfowl.*

include a stamped, self-addressed envelope and include your name, address, Virginia hunting license number, home phone number and next of kin. The pre-registration mailing address is Commander, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort A.P. Hill, ATTN: Hunting Section, Building TT0163, Bowling Green, Virginia 22427. If you live within 50 miles of the base, you can pre-register in person one day in advance of the desired hunting date, after 8 a.m., at Building TT0163.

If you're waiting in line to hunt and the base reaches the cut-off point, you can pre-register for the next day, if you desire. Even if you pre-register, though, you must go to Building TT0163 before 6 a.m. and obtain your hunter's bag card. Otherwise your space may be assigned to another hunter waiting in line.

Regulations for hunting deer vary widely from base to base, and it's important to be aware of these before embarking on a trip. Organized drives are prohibited while deer hunting on Quantico and A.P. Hill. Dogs are permitted on Pickett for deer hunting, but prohibited on the other two. Slugs must be used in shotguns on Quantico. On Pickett, slugs are illegal. On A.P. Hill, the gun deer hunter has his choice of either slugs or buckshot.

Wild turkeys are abundant on all three of the military bases and hunting for these elusive black birds is quite popular. Fall and spring hunting are allowed on all three bases.

During the spring season on Pickett, an average of one turkey a day is bagged. Permits are issued at the game checking station in Building T-420 on this base, starting at 4:30 a.m. If you wish to hunt turkeys on a weekend in spring, it's wise to get in line much earlier than that, because once the daily quota is filled, all other hunters must be turned away. However, on weekdays the quota is seldom filled and it's usually no problem to get a permit.

Several fields on the military bases are managed for dove, where grains that appeal to these abundant gray birds are planted, then cut prior to the hunting season. Shooting is generally done on Wednesdays and Saturdays only.

Woodcock are found on all three bases and hunting is normally best from late October through early December, when these migratory upland birds are filtering through on their flights south. Quail populations aren't what they used to be anywhere in Virginia, but the hunting for bobwhites is still reasonably productive on all three bases. Ruffed grouse are normally thought of as birds of the mountainous areas in Virginia, but there are surprisingly good populations of these 1½ pound brown bombshells on Quantico. Look for them along edges of brushy tree growth and older timber or in grown-up clearcut areas.

Rabbit hunting can be good on the military bases, and squirrel populations in areas with mature mast-

bearing trees are excellent. Waterfowling is quite popular on Quantico, and blinds available for hunters on several of the lakes. Jump shooting on ponds, lakes and streams is also possible, but you must have a boat or a retriever if you jump shoot ducks on lakes. Canada geese are protected on A.P. Hill.

The U.S. Marine Corps Base at Quantico lies in Fauquier, Stafford and Prince William Counties. It's located about midway between Washington, D.C. and Fredericksburg and is reached by taking the Quantico exit off Interstate 95. Quantico covers 54,000 acres. The mailing address is U.S. Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia 22134.

Fort Pickett Military Reservation covers 45,198 acres in Dinwiddie and Brunswick Counties. It's located west of Petersburg about 25 miles and is reached via Route 460. A limited number of camping spaces are available for self-contained units, but no tent camping is permitted. The mailing address for maps and additional information on hunting is Fort Pickett Military Reservation, Blackstone, Virginia 23824.

Fort A.P. Hill Military Reservation encompasses 77,000 acres in Caroline County, just east of Fredericksburg. It's accessible via US 301 or Virginia Route 2. Camping is available on the base for hunters. To obtain a map and booklet on hunting regulations, write Fort A.P. Hill Military Reservation, Bowling Green, Virginia 22417. □



# Zero In

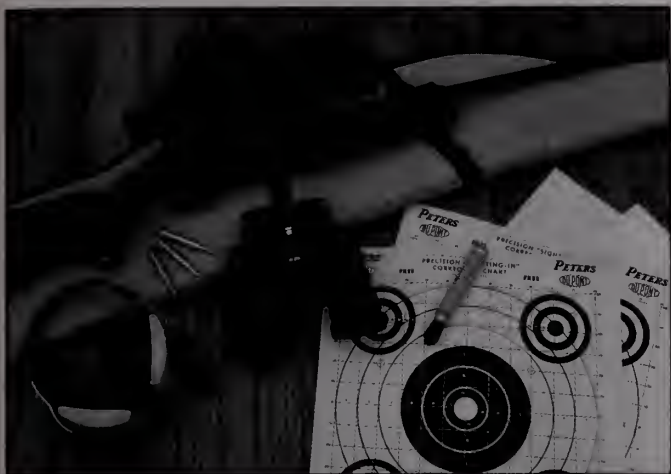
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## Before You Hunt

Take the time to zero in your rifle before the hunting season; your effort will pay off later in accurate shots.

By William E. Neal  
Photos by Sarah Bartenstein





Whether you'll be using the same rifle you've used for years or a brand new one, it's a good idea to zero your sights and bore to an aimpoint. Keep safety in mind when selecting the site for this procedure. A range is ideal, but any location will do if: it is free of rocks or other objects on which bullets could ricochet; it has a backstop for the target and bullets, a table high enough from which to shoot, and a reasonably comfortable stool; and it is not a "high traffic" area where passersby are likely to stray into your line of fire, or anywhere near it.

Once you've selected a location, assemble the items you'll need (above). These include, in addition to the rifle itself, targets (and any additional equipment you need to hang them), markers, cartridges, ear protectors (either the kind we've shown here or earplugs), binoculars, and either sandbags or a bench rest and sandbag.

Finally, set up your target (right). It's a good idea to set it 25 to 30 yards away to start. Now you're ready to begin.



The day dawned cold and very windy so as I loaded my new 30-06 semi-automatic rifle, I decided to try still hunting up-wind along a wooded ridge overlooking the Appomattox River. Still hunting amounts to walking carefully and quietly, stopping often to look and listen. About two hours into the hunt, I heard something rattling the leaves in front of me, immediately dropped to one knee, and soon saw a nice forkhorn buck meandering towards me. This was not the trophy I was looking for, but I figured any buck would do as my first deer in a two-deer season, so I took aim and waited. When he stopped about 10 feet from me, I squeezed the trigger. . . and squeezed, and squeezed, and squeezed, and squeezed, but nothing happened! "What is wrong with this gun?" I thought. "It's brand new, but it won't fire." I unshouldered the gun, and it dawned on me that the safety was still on. The buck, meanwhile, had seen enough of that fool playing with a stick, so he turned and sashayed back the way he'd come. This would be a just another ridiculous story of "buck fever"—that is, if the buck hadn't let his curiosity override his good sense. He stopped about 100 yards away to take another look. I placed the crosshairs on his shoulder and squeezed again. Fortunately, the rifle had been sighted in, because I would not have gotten a third chance. This time the rifle worked properly.

While few hunters purchase a new rifle and fail to fire it a few times prior to the season, many do not take the time to do it right, and many more do not repeat the procedure between successive seasons. Such failures,

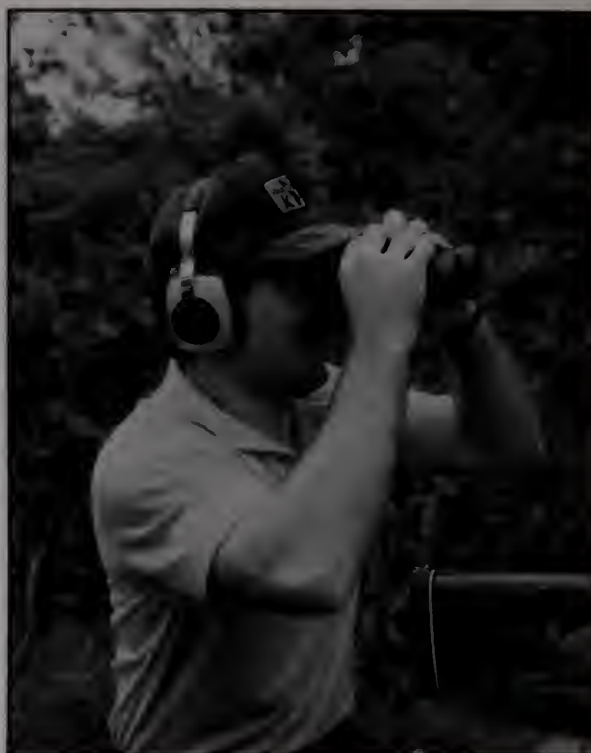
especially when telescopic sights are used, can cause hunters to cripple and maim fine game animals. A modern rifle is a precision instrument which can, if left to its own merits, place bullet after bullet on the same impact point through its entire effective range. However, when we place a sighting mechanism on the gun, we introduce the potential for mechanical error which can amount to a distance of a few inches to several feet between your aimpoint and the actual impact area of bullets fired from a rifle.

Sighting in is the procedure whereby a rifle's sights and bore are zeroed to an aimpoint. Practice with a properly zeroed weapon creates accuracy. I know a fellow who is an excellent shot. He religiously zeros his rifle every year and habitually harvests his deer with two or three well placed shots. A few years ago he took his favorite rifle on the range to fire a few practice rounds, and lo and behold, the gun scattered his bullets over an area three feet square. When nothing he tried solved his problem, my friend carried his gun to a gunsmith who found a slight warp in its wooden foregrip. A small operation with a piece of sandpaper corrected the problem and the gun zeroed. The gentlemen bagged his deer that year, but think what might have happened without the initial firing. With a pocketful of luck he might have killed a deer, but in the process he could have crippled several and missed a fine trophy. The zeroing process is really quite simple, and it's fun. Why not try it before you venture out this year?



To sight in a deer rifle, or any firearm, for that matter, you need a safe place to shoot. A range is best, but any place that provides at least 100 yards of uninterrupted vision and a safe impact or "backstop" area for your bullets will do. Of course, if you are sighting in a squirrel rifle, say .22 caliber, you will need less shooting space, but the principles are the same regardless of the firearm. Decide which way you will shoot and check your "backstop" to make sure it will stop your bullets. A dam, hillside, or an old road cut will do nicely, but you should select an area where no one is likely to stray into your field of fire. Also, your impact area should be free of rocks or other objects that could cause a ricochet. Your target should be large enough for you to observe where any wild shots may hit it and it should have some sort of bull's-eye, or aiming point, near its center. Many gun dealers can supply ready-made targets for a nominal fee, but you can make your own from a large piece of cardboard or similar material. Use a magic marker or similar instrument to draw several consecutively smaller circles on your cardboard and draw a bull's-eye in the center circle. Next, obtain a comfortable chair or bench, a table, and a couple of sandbags.

For the purpose of this discussion, let's assume you are zeroing a new deer rifle equipped with a telescopic sight; but the basic techniques described here will work for any rifle. If you are checking zero between seasons, you may wish to bypass short range firing. However, new rifle-scope combinations often are so far out of alignment with one another that bullets fired at targets 100 yards or



*(Left, top) Place the rifle on the table with the sandbags under the foregrip and the stock (or, if you have access to a benchrest, use it in combination with a sandbag, as we have here). Sit on the stool and position yourself and the rifle so that you can shoot comfortably. Try it out with the gun empty, then with bullets. Once you have printed the target three or four times, check it with the binoculars (above) and adjust the sight accordingly, repeating the procedure until you are satisfied that you are hitting your aimpoint (left, bottom).*

more away print several feet from the shooter's aimpoint. To solve this problem, set your target 25 to 30 yards from your shooting position. Now check your scope and rifle combination to make sure the scope is fastened to the weapon in a totally immovable position. Place the sandbags on a table and your rifle on them so that one bag is under the foregrip and the stock is resting on the other. (You can use a benchrest, as we have in the accompanying photos, but sandbags are less expensive and will work fine.) The latter bag should be small enough to be moved easily back and forth under the stock, thus raising and lowering the rifle muzzle, but both must be large enough to hold the gun securely in an upright position. Now, with your rifle empty, try out the entire mechanism. You should be able to sit on your chair or bench and comfortably sight on your bull's-eye while the gun is resting on the sandbags. If you are not totally comfortable, re-adjust the system until you are. Adjustment may require moving your target up or down and/or modifying the relationship of your bench, table, and sandbags.

When everything is ready, your target set, your rifle is loaded, and no one is in your line of fire, carefully sight on your bull's-eye while the weapon is resting on the sandbags and squeeze off a shot. Repeat the procedure until you have printed the target three or four times. Your bullets probably will not





*The Izaak Walton League of America will use the proceeds from the sale of this print to fund clean-up projects for the Chesapeake Bay. The print is taken from an original painting by Maynard Reece. IWLA photo*

## Print Sold To Help Clean Up the Bay

The Izaak Walton League of America is publishing a limited edition Chesapeake Bay Conservation Stamp print. Proceeds from the sale of the print and associated items will be used to fund Bay clean-up projects.

The print is from a specially commissioned painting by Maynard Reece, and depicts five Canada geese flying low over a typical Chesapeake Bay marsh. The print, stamps and a special Chesapeake Bay medallion will be available through a network of art galleries, selected sporting goods outlets, and other recognized stamp print sources. Edition quantity will be limited to the number of firm orders received by November 1, 1984.

For more information on the print and the Izaak Walton League's Bay clean-up activities, write to IWLA, 11701 North Fort Myer Drive, Suite 1100, Arlington, Virginia 22209. □

## Governor Charles Robb to Speak at VWF Banquet

The keynote address by Governor Charles S. Robb and awards to Virginia's outstanding conservation leaders will highlight the Virginia Wildlife Federation's 19th Annual Conservation Awards Banquet on October 20 in Roanoke. The banquet begins at 6:00 p.m. and takes place at the Hotel Roanoke. Tickets are available for \$17 each and must be ordered in advance using the form

below. Return your order and check (payable to VWF) to: VWF, 4602-D West Grove Court, Virginia Beach 23455. (Hotel reservations should be made separately with the Hotel Roanoke.)

Virginia Wildlife Federation  
Nineteenth Annual Awards Banquet

6:00 p.m. October 20, 1984

Hotel Roanoke  
Roanoke, Virginia 24026

My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed for \_\_\_\_\_ tickets at \$17.00 each. Make check payable to Virginia Wildlife Federation. *All tickets must be ordered by October 12.* No tickets will be sold at the door.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State, Zip



## A sportsman without *Virginia Wildlife* is like a fish out of water!

Before you venture out to the dove field, the deer stand or the fishing hole, read the magazine that gives you the latest on how-to, where-to and when-to: *Virginia Wildlife*. It's the award-winning magazine that gives you the edge, no matter what your quarry.

No other magazine does it quite like *Virginia Wildlife*, month after month, year after year, in 36 pages of color and adventure. That's why the International Association for Conservation Information consistently ranks *Virginia Wildlife* among the top five wildlife magazines in the U.S. and Canada, including a first-place award in 1982.

So don't be up the creek without a paddle—subscribe today! It's only five dollars a year (\$12.50 for three), so how can you lose?

Please send me Virginia's foremost sportsman's magazine, *Virginia Wildlife* for ☐ 1 year (\$5) ☐ 3 years (\$12.50).

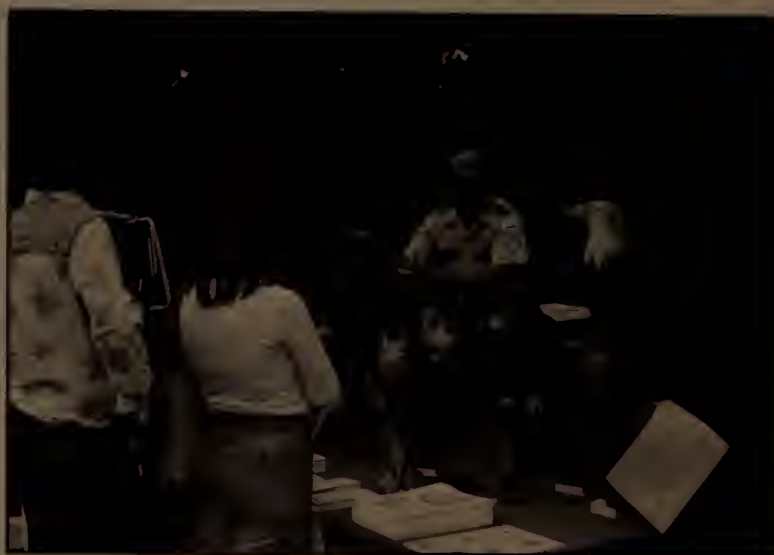
Name

Address

City

State & Zip

Make check payable to Treasurer of Virginia and send to: *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230.



Harry Gillam

*Virginia Game Warden Jim Taylor of New Kent County answers questions for visitors at a past NHF Day program at Izaak Walton Park.*

## Sharing the Outdoor Tradition NHF Day 1984

Often the only thing separating non-sportsmen from hunters and fishermen is the opportunity to experience the excitement and rewards offered by the outdoors.

On National Hunting and Fishing Day 1984, September 22, sportsmen are encouraged to "Share the Outdoor Tradition" with their non-sporting friends.

There are many ways to participate, suggest the people at NHF Day Headquarters in Riverside, Connecticut. Activities might range from an open house at a local sportsman's club to planning county-wide programs sponsored jointly by local clubs and

conservation groups.

In Virginia, Jeffrey Curtis of the Game Commission's education division has a full day of events planned at the Izaak Walton Park in Midlothian (12 miles west of Richmond on Route 60). From noon until 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 23 (the day after the official national observance), numerous events, displays and demonstrations will give people plenty of opportunities to learn more about the outdoors and outdoor sports. Many of these will be hands-on activities, and the program will be fun for the entire family. The scheduled demonstrations include fly fishing and casting, trap shooting, pointing and retrieving dogs, black powder shooting and falconry. Wildlife art and decoys will be on display, as well. There is no admission charge. For more information, call Curtis at 804/257-1000.

Similar programs are planned throughout the state in observance of NHF Day. Find the one nearest you on the following list, and join in the





Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation

Governor Charles S. Robb signs a Certificate of Recognition calling the attention of Virginians to the significance of NHF Day (above). The Governor is shown with three members of the Game Commission staff: Executive Director Richard H. Cross, Jr., Education Division Chief Harry L. Gillam, and Wildlife Education Coordinator Jeffrey M. Curtis, who planned the NHF Day program being held at Izaak Walton Park on September 23. Washington Redskins running back John Riggins serves as this year's honorary chairman of NHF Day (right).



NHF Day

excitement. The locations, times and dates are listed for each, as is a contact person, in case you want more specific information. Note that not all programs are scheduled for September 22, the official, nationwide date.

**Charlottesville:** Fashion Square Mall  
Saturday, 9-22; 9:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.  
Contact: Kermit Reel, 804/977-6942

**Lynchburg:** River Ridge Mall  
Saturday, 9-22; 10 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Contact: Preston Bryant, 804/846-6822

**Newport News:** Julius Conn Gym  
Friday and Saturday, 9-21, noon-9 p.m.; 9-22, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.  
(Note: this event is in conjunction with the Eastern Regional Big Game Trophy Contest.)  
Contact: Charles Rogers, 804/596-7668

**Northern Virginia:** Tysons Corner Mall  
Saturday, 9-15; 10 a.m.-7 p.m.  
Contact: Glenn Frum, 703/273-0288

**Portsmouth:** City Park  
Saturday and Sunday, 9-22 and 23;

9 a.m.-dusk each day  
Contact: Tom Blake 804/393-8481

**Richmond:** Izaak Walton Park  
(see above)

**Roanoke:** Tanglewood Mall  
Saturday, 9-22; 9 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Contact: Paul Shufflebarger, 703/774-6176

**Staunton:** Staunton Plaza  
Saturday, 9-22; 9 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Contact: Earnest Nuckols, 703/886-3240

**Virginia Beach:** Lynnhaven Mall  
Saturday, 9-22; 9:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.  
Contact: Rob Pointer, 804/468-6061

**Winchester:** Frederick County Park  
Saturday, 9-22; 10 a.m.-6 p.m.  
Contact: Paul Kadel, 703/662-1926

NHF Day's success in reaching the public each year depends upon the support of the nation's hunters and fishermen. Every individual and every club that participates makes a difference. One well-known person lending his support this year is Washington Redskins running back John Riggins, who serves as Honorary Chairman of NHF Day 1984. Riggins, in addition to being a record-breaking running back and a

member of the 1983 NFL championship team, is an avid hunter and fisherman who began hunting as a young boy. "When I was about 10, I used to trail along behind my dad when he went quail hunting. My first gun was a single shot .22 rifle, and later I got a single shot .410 shotgun."

September 22 will mark the 13th annual observance of NHF Day. It was established in 1972 by Congress to give recognition to hunters and fishermen for their contributions to conservation. Governor Charles S. Robb signed a Certificate of Recognition here in Virginia to call the attention of Virginians to the significance of NHF Day.

NHF day is sponsored by more than 40 of the nation's leading conservation organizations, including the National Wildlife Federation, the Izaak Walton League of America and the Wildlife Society. Between 10 and 14 million Americans participate in activities commemorating this day each year.

For more information, contact NHF Day, P.O. Box 1075, Riverside, Connecticut 06878. □



## The Mosquito and Me

It's a natural tendency to forget unpleasant things, like mosquitoes, when they're not upon you. I was reminded just how nasty these creatures could be when I found myself in a boggy piece of bottomland this past July. Though this hunter training session took place within sight of Chicago down the shore of Lake Michigan, the bugs were as uncivilized as any I have ever seen. Since the number of bites was massive, I decided to do two things. Get some good repellent and become more familiar, through reading, with the mosquito.

The scientific data are dull. I much prefer the notes on the subject by Horace Kephart in his *Camping and Woodcraft*, published by The Macmillan Company in 1916:

"Summer twilight brings the mosquito. In fact, when we go far north or far south, we have him with us both by day and night. Rather I should say that we have *her*; for the male mosquito is a gentleman, who sips daintily of nectar and minds his own business, while madame his spouse is a whining, peevish, venomous virago, that goes about seeking

whose nerves she may unstring and whose blood she may devour. Strange to say, not among mosquitoes only, but among ticks, fleas, chiggers, and the whole legion of bloodthirsty, stinging flies and midges, it is only the female that attacks man and beast. Stranger still, the mosquito is not only a bloodsucker but an incorrigible wine-bibber as well—it will get helplessly fuddled on any sweet wine, such as port, or on sugared spirits, while of gin it is inordinately fond.

"Such disreputable habits—the querulous singsong, the poisoned sting, the thirst for blood, and the practice of getting dead drunk at every opportunity, are enough of themselves to make the mosquito a thing accursed; but these are by no means the worst counts in our indictment against it. We have learned, within the past few years, that all the suffering and mortality from malaria, yellow fever, and filariasis (including the hideous and fat elephantiasis of the tropics) is due to germs that are carried in no other way than by mosquitoes."

So what to do about them? From the same period, a "solution" from Doctor L.O. Howard, Chief of the Bureau of Entomology, U.S. Department of Agriculture:

"Fishermen and hunters will find that a good mixture against mosquitoes and black-flies can be made as

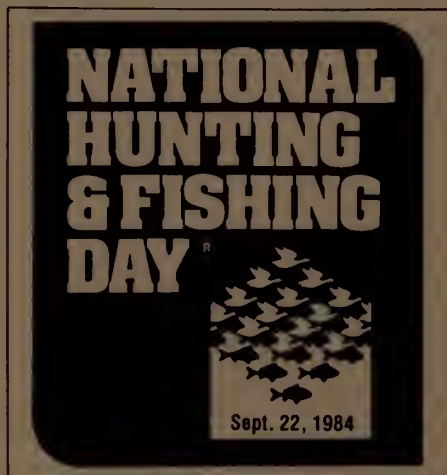
follows: Take 2½ pounds of mutton tallow, melt and strain it. While still hot add ½ pound black tar (Canadian tar), stir thoroughly, and pour into the receptacle in which it is to be contained. When nearly cool stir in 3 ounces of oil of citronella and 1½ ounces of pennyroyal."

Well, on second thought, those bites weren't so bad! □

by Mel White

## About the Authors

C.H. "Kit" Shaffer was field coordinator for the Commission's game division for 32 years until his retirement in 1980. He lives in Lynchburg and is a freelance writer and an avid turkey hunter. Gerald Almy is a hunting and fishing editor for *Sports Afield*; he lives in Woodstock and has written numerous articles for *Virginia Wildlife*. Larry Hart is the chief of the Commission's lands and engineering division, and has written for *Virginia Wildlife* on such diverse subjects as rabbit hunting and fisheries management. Jack Randolph is assistant director of the Game Commission and a frequent contributor to the magazine. Mel White is assistant chief of the education division and senior editor of *Virginia Wildlife*; his co-author, Lt. Herb Foster, is an assistant supervisor in the enforcement division, overseeing the education activities of the game wardens in his district. Californian Annette Bignami writes freelance articles on game and fish cooking and is the author of several books on these topics. Bill Neal is the field coordinator for the Commission's fish division; his most recent contribution to the magazine was a series of articles on the agency's striper program. □







(Above) Our shooter studies the target after his first round of three shots.

hit exactly on your aimpoint but they should print a one-to two-inch group somewhere on the target. If they do not, analyze yourself. Are you flinching? Are you squeezing the trigger versus snatching it? Keep trying until you obtain an acceptable impact group. When you do, observe its distance and direction from your aimpoint. Most scopes contain adjustment screws on their top and side; most make a clicking noise when turned. The top screw usually adjusts your perception of the scope's internal sighting mechanism up or down, and the side screw moves your perception right or left. You can obtain information regarding the meaning of the clicks, at various ranges, from the literature the manufacturer supplied with the scope, but if such information is not available simply adjust the scope one way or the other three or four clicks and fire another group. The new impact point will tell you whether or not you are adjusted correctly. Remember, you adjust your scope setting in the direction you want the impact point to move. Continue firing groups of three rounds, adjusting your scope until you are satisfied that your bullets are printing the target as close to your aimpoint as possible. The prints should be "dead on" the aimpoint at 25 to 35 yards. Since all rifles handle some ammunition better than they do others, you may wish to experiment with several different brands and bullet weights to find the combination that works best in your gun, but you should always zero your weapon with the ammunition you intend to use in hunting.

**W**hen the rifle is printing "dead on" your aimpoint at close range, you are ready to move your target to greater range. I recommend that your final zeroing for rifles should be done at

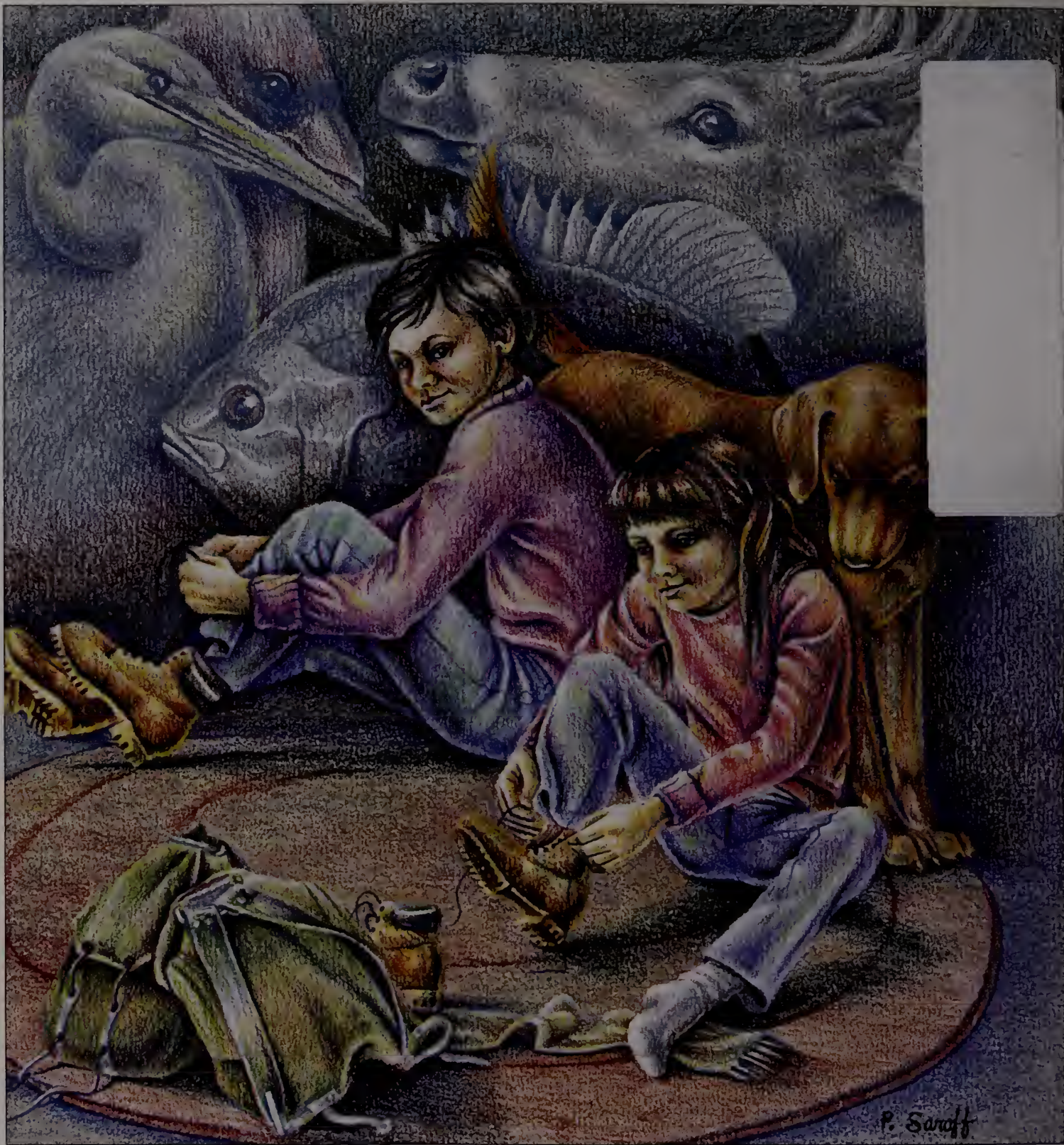
## Do's and Don't's

- *Don't* zero a rifle when you are tired, irritated, or otherwise distracted.
- *Do* zero when you are fresh and well rested.
- *Don't* zero a rifle when weather conditions are adverse: foggy, windy, poor light, etc.
- *Don't* get fidgety when you don't do it right the first time; this will cause you to make errors.
- *Don't* think of zeroing as a chore you must do; *do* remember that practice makes perfect, and that knowing that your rifle shoots where you aim it will make you a better shot!

100 if you are hunting in Virginia. This is based on my assumption that most Virginia deer are shot at ranges of 100 yards or less. If you plan to use your rifle in the West, where average kill ranges are greater, you may wish to zero at a greater range. With the target in its new position, check the target, bench, table and sandbag system for comfort and safety, adjust if necessary, load your rifle, sight on the bull as you did at the shorter range and squeeze off a group of three to four rounds. Check the group and re-adjust your scope as needed to bring the impact point in line with your aimpoint. When deer hunting, I shoot a 180 grain bullet in a Remington semi-automatic 30-06 rifle. You may wish to zero your weapon "dead on" at 100 yards but I recommend a slightly different procedure. Line of sight is a straight line, but rifles actually "lob" bullets along curved lines, called trajectories, to their targets. Therefore a bullet fired from a rifle will pass through the line of sight twice, once near the rifle muzzle on the way up and again further away on the way down. All ammunition manufacturers supply trajectory charts for their ammunition. I know from consulting such a chart that when the impact point for my 180 grain bullets is about two inches above my aimpoint at 100 yards, my bullet will be about two inches above any line of sight 50 yards from the muzzle and exactly on target 225 yards from the muzzle. I zero with such information in mind and you may wish to do so. It's simple when you have access to a chart. Some people go beyond this point and tape the information to their gunstock for ready reference.

After your rifle is zeroed to your satisfaction, you'll be comfortable enough with it to hit what you shoot at. When you achieve such accuracy, you are ready to hunt. □





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**National Hunting & Fishing Day**

September 22, 1984